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ABSTRACT

This early childhood education text was designed to help students and child care staff become effective advocates for the improvement of quality, salaries, and working conditions in child care programs. Unit I provides literature on the issues affecting the child care field and focuses on strategies to improve salaries and working conditions. Articles on the teacher shortage, the impact of high staff turnover on children, and employer-supported child care contribute to a picture of current child care. Unit II covers: (1) state and federal labor laws; (2) substitutes and in-home caregivers; (3) strategies for improving relationships among staff and between parents and staff; (4) the special stresses of various kinds of child care; (5) the health and safety concerns of child care staff; and (6) unions. Unit III provides information on salary schedules, health coverage, and pension plans. Also considered are various center policies, such as those regarding personnel, substitute and volunteer procedures, and evaluation, and ways to implement these policies. An instructor's guide outlines learning objectives and offers suggestions for class discussion and activities for each part of each unit. Organizational and information resources are listed. (RH)

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Marcy Whitebook

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

Introduction

Americans are witnessing a profound change in the nature of family life, one which presents a formidable challenge to those of us in early childhood education. A generation ago, a minority of mothers worked outside their homes, and thus only a small percentage of young children spent their days in group care settings. Today, however, most preschoolers have working mothers, and many find themselves in family day care homes or child care centers for many of their waking hours. As this trend continues, the need for trained and committed caregivers increases.

But political and economic realities work against the creation of a well-prepared child care workforce. There is little incentive for potential providers. After completing a two-year college degree program in Early Childhood Education, students can expect to earn only slightly more than minimum wage in most states. In California, known for relatively high levels of teacher pay due to greater-than-average public subsidy, salaries for child care teachers hover around $6.00 an hour, with aides earning just above minimum wage. Low pay is too seldom balanced by other benefits such as health coverage, paid vacations or pensions. Poor working conditions and limited appreciation often compound the insult.

Disillusionment is widespread among students and professionals in the field. In almost any gathering one hears talk of turnover, burnout and career changes. Many dedicated people wonder how they can afford to continue working in the field. They feel inadequately prepared to meet such everyday challenges of child care as limited budgets, funding cuts and complicated bureaucracies. Turnover in centers averages at least 40% a year, far greater than the 10% average found in other human service fields.

Over 800 post-secondary institutions in the U.S. offer some form of training for early childhood personnel at the two- and four-year level. Over 25,000 students a year enroll in child development courses in the California community college system alone. Still, a crying need for trained teachers exists throughout the country.

Being an early childhood educator requires more than working with children. Good teachers also need to develop skills for working with co-workers and parents. But more and more, early childhood educators must also learn how to advocate for themselves, recognizing advocacy as an important part of their professional responsibility. They need preparation in how to work for change, to create better programs for children and families.

Early childhood instructors can play a key role in addressing the expanding needs of students. Preparing early childhood practitioners as advocates must begin early in their training. Disillusionment can only be stemmed if people enter the field with appropriate expectations about what they will encounter, and if they have a commitment to work for change.

This curriculum guide will assist you in your efforts to provide the necessary ideas and experiences for students to emerge as the advocates so desperately needed in our field. It is our strong belief that advocacy cannot be taught in one class session, but rather must be presented as a strand throughout the entire early childhood curriculum. In order to fully understand these concepts students need more than data. They need practical experience. They need opportunities to:

- voice their own values and opinions in ever-enlarging arenas
- listen to opposing viewpoints
- achieve a sense of membership in a group
- work in small groups toward consensus
- recognize and represent different issues
- challenge negative stereotypes
- use resources

Perhaps most important, students need to observe and talk with positive role models, people who are engaged in advocating for better child care.

What is the Child Care Employee Project?

The Child Care Employee Project (CCEP) is a non-profit advocacy organization working to improve the wages, status and working conditions of the child care profession.

Organized in 1977 by child care workers, CCEP provides assistance each year to thousands of child care providers, administrators, parents and educators. CCEP works with government agencies, community organizations, policy makers, unions, employers and the media on local and national issues that affect the child care workforce.

This text has grown out of a series of popular, topical "handouts" which CCEP has developed over the years on a wide range of workplace issues. Continual requests from students and instructors for information on these topics led us to revise our older handouts, and add new ones, to compile a unified packet which could be adapted to fit community college and other courses more conveniently.

How to Use the Text

"Working for Quality Child Care" is organized into three units, which correspond loosely with the subject areas of several Early Childhood Education courses taught in the California community college system as well as in other states.

Unit I, "Teaching in Child Care Today," was compiled with the "Introduction" and "Child, Family and Community" courses in mind; it gives an overview of the current state of the field, and an account of some effective strategies to improve it. Unit II, "Creating a Better Work Environment," gives students a thorough groundwork in employee rights, working relationships and workplace health and safety, which will be especially useful during their "Practicum" or work-experience course. Unit III, "Managing a Quality Program," speaks especially to students in the "Administration" course, covering the areas of wage and benefit policies, and other program policies and procedures.

Naturally, the units can be adapted to many other uses. We encourage you to read through the entire curriculum for ideas that will enhance the particular courses you teach, and to pick and choose according to your needs. Many of the "introductory" articles in Unit I can provide a helpful review for more advanced or experienced students. Administration students should be aware of the employee rights and needs addressed in Units I and II. All students, whether they will work as administrators or not, will benefit from an understanding of how a child care center is managed, and how staff at all levels can be involved in planning and decision-making.

The articles compiled here were written as practical tools, in response to child care workers' needs for concrete help on the job. Encourage your students to save this text, take it to their workplaces, and share it with their co-workers. We hope they will see "Working for Quality Child Care," and the Child Care Employee Project, as resources which can help them do their jobs well, long after their coursework is over.

UNIT I

Learning Objectives

In Section A, "State of the Field," students will learn about:

- how child care benefits society
- the increased demand for child care
- demographics of the child care workforce
- public attitudes toward child care workers
- current working conditions and salaries
- the relationship between working conditions and quality of care
- issues raised by recent accusations of child abuse in child care programs
- men in child care

In Section B, "Working for Change," students will be introduced to:

- successful strategies to raise child care workers' wages
- salary surveys
- comparable worth
- working with parents to advocate for change

Discussion and Activities

A. STATE OF THE FIELD

"Who Are Child Care Workers?"

* Complete an informal survey of five or ten friends, asking them what they think a child care worker does; how much money child care workers earn, and how much they should earn; how much training they have, and how much they should have. Discuss the responses in class, and analyze the assumptions behind different points of view. Brainstorm ways to counteract misinformation and to communicate positively about child care work.

* Design a child care center for 25 children. Consider, among other factors, what the teacher/child ratio will be; what the teachers will be paid; how the program will be funded; how much parents will pay in fees.

* At the beginning of the semester, choose one issue prominent in the media that affects children and families. "Track" and report on media coverage of the issue throughout the semester. Focus on how the media handles the issue in terms of tone, amount of coverage, bias, etc.

"The Teacher Shortage"

* Explain in your own words why there is a teacher-shortage -- to another student in the class, or to someone less familiar with the topic (e.g. a neighbor, a business student).

* Research comparisons with worker shortages in other professions (e.g. nurses, computer programmers, elementary teachers) and what has been done to fill them. Examine the role of government, employers, unions and professional organizations. Would any of these methods work in the case of child care workers?

"Wage Woes"

* Compare local child care wages with those in unskilled or entry-level jobs (such as retail store clerks, restaurant and fast food workers, housecleaners) and skilled jobs (elementary teachers, nurses and business managers).

* Contact the U.S. Census Bureau for current information on the poverty level, average wage increases in other professions and leading economic indicators. How do child care workers fare?

"Who's Minding the Child Care Workers?"

* Interview a child care worker about what she or he likes most and least about the job. Focus discussion on change in problem areas.

* Observe a child care worker at a center for a full-day or half-day shift, or report on your own shift. Note everything that he or she does, including interactions with children and adults, preparation of materials, planning, breaks, lunch, clean-up, and so on. Discuss which aspects of the day's work could contribute to burnout.

* Complete a job satisfaction inventory (obtain form from CCEP). Focus the discussion on comparisons between student responses and research findings about burnout in child care.

"Child Care and the Feminization of Poverty"

* Examine statements of prominent individuals or groups who are opposed to the expansion of child care services, or to mothers of young children entering the workforce. Focus discussion on varying views of the family, and alternative proposals for caring for the children of working mothers.

* Invite as a guest speaker a child care worker who is also a parent supporting a family.

* Brainstorm a list of the effects on the local community of all the child care programs closing down -- or the child care fees doubling.

"Turn, Turn, Turn: Teacher Turnover"

* Invite as a guest speaker a teacher who has remained in the field over five years, and who can talk about factors which have contributed to her or his "survival."

"Child Care Scare"

* Discuss the ways in which quality child care can help to prevent child abuse.

* Explore possible explanations for the increase in accusations of child abuse against child care workers.

* Examine media coverage of an alleged child abuse incident in a child care program. Is the coverage fair? What are the underlying assumptions? Is there follow-up?

"Day Care: Men Need Not Apply"

* Look for current local data concerning the number of men working in child care. Has there been a decrease in recent years? If no data is available, conduct an informal survey.

* Conduct interviews with men currently working in the field, or who have recently left.

* Conduct a public survey of attitudes toward men working in child care.

* Discuss the effects on children of not having any male caregivers.

* Invite center directors, parents and teachers -- male and female -- for a panel discussion about the role of men in child care.

"What Can Employer-Supported Programs Do?"

* Examine what your own college does (or doesn't do) to help students and employees obtain, or pay for, child care. Ask fellow students who have young children, especially students in the class, about the child care arrangements they've made in order to attend school. What problems have they encountered? How much do they pay? Do class members know anyone who can't attend school, or had to drop out, because of child care problems?

* If there is child care on campus, examine the economics of the program -- for example, the average daily attendance, the fees and the staffing costs. Interview campus officials, such as the dean of students, the business manager, the head of counseling, or the director of student activities, about how and why the program got started, and how it runs. (If there is no child care on campus, why not?) What would be the effect on students if the child care program closed? What would be the effect on the college if all students who are parents had to drop out?

* Invite working parents to speak to the class about how the need for child care affects their work life. Focus the discussion on pressures facing parents, and incentives for employer involvement in child care.

"Little Kids, Big Bucks"

* Interview teachers who work at Kinder-Care, or at another child care chain, about their reaction to this article. Is it accurate and fair? If possible, also interview center directors or other company representatives.

B. WORKING FOR CHANGE

"Beyond Babysitting"

* As an introduction to the political process, identify your state senator and assembly member, and find out what legislation they have carried, or are currently carrying, that affects children and families.

* Write a letter to an elected official from your district, or to a newspaper editor, expressing your opinion about a particular children's issue. First, present this letter to your classmates in a small-group discussion. Group members should raise potential challenges to the expressed point of view. Take these into account, revise the letter, and send it. When appropriate, request a reply.

"Salary Surveys"

* Find current child care salary data in the local area, or in another part of the country (using the local child care resource and referral agency or CCEP), and compare it with past data. What are the trends?

"Raising Salaries: Strategies That Work"

* Interview a nurse, public school teacher or other human service professional about his or her wages and benefits. How do these compare with child care wages and benefits in your area? If they are significantly higher, how did this come about in that particular profession? What strategies were pursued, what kinds of organizing or action? Could any of these strategies be adapted to the child care field?

"Comparable Worth"

* Compare early childhood education with other jobs in terms of compensation, status, skills required, satisfaction, public service and creativity.

* Observing a classroom teacher, examine the skill and training required for each activity performed. Discuss how to communicate the nature and complexity of this work to people outside the child care field.

* Practice presenting comparable worth arguments for child care salaries, first to another student in the class, then to an outside person.

"Who's Caring for Your Kids?"

* Role-play a dialogue between a child care teacher and a parent. The teacher is frustrated about earning a low wage, and having trouble making ends meet. The parent is frustrated about how much child care costs, wonders where all the money goes, and is upset at the prospect of a fee increase.

"Child Care Advocates' Aptitude Test"

* Take the "test" in class and discuss answers in small groups.

* Administer the test to co-workers, to students in another early childhood class, to parents and/or to a friend outside the child care field.

UNIT II

Learning Objectives

In Section A. "Employee Rights on the Job," students will learn about:

- state and federal laws protecting child care workers
- how to constructively secure their legal rights with employers
- resources to assist them in pursuing legal rights

In Section B. "Working Relationships," students will learn about:

- the importance in child care teaching of skillful interaction with other adults, not just with children
- how to improve communication and cooperation with parents and co-workers

In Section C. "Staying Healthy," students will learn about:

- possible on-the-job health hazards
- stress, and how to relieve it
- issues for pregnant child care workers, or those whose children attend the same child care program

Discussion and Activities

A. EMPLOYEE RIGHTS ON THE JOB

* Pretest the class concerning their basic understanding of the labor laws which affect them, or of California licensing regulations. Following the test, discuss the law and/or licensing regulations, and the "whistle-blowing" protection described in one of the articles here.

* Take an employment issue or two -- for example, breaks and overtime pay -- and compare the law with the reality of students' work experience. Is the situation at your workplace legal, and/or adequate? Is the current law adequate? Brainstorm solutions or compromises.

* Discuss licensing violations in students' centers. Develop strategies for correcting these before resorting to making a report to Licensing. Role-play discussions with the director.

* Role-play the reporting of a licensing violation. Include a retaliation by the employer, and the reporting of that act to the Department of Labor Standards Enforcement. Have a mock hearing with both sides arguing their case before a hearing officer.

* Invite as a guest speaker someone who has pursued a claim under California's whistle-blowing law. (Contact the Child Care Employee Project, or the Child Care Law Center, for names.)

* If your state does not have a "whistle-blowing" provision, let students investigate the possibility of initiating one.

B. WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

* Bring in a case history of a problem between staff members, or between a staff member and a parent. Is the problem structural? Is it a matter of poor communication? What should be done?

C. STAYING HEALTHY

* Take an inventory of the closets at your workplace. Are any cleaning or art supplies hazardous? What other stresses or health hazards exist at the center?

* Develop a stress checklist as a way of monitoring yourself. Compare it with the situation where you work. Develop a plan, with a timeline, for reducing your stress level on the job.

* Interview someone who has worked in child care while pregnant, someone who has her or his own children attending the program, and someone who has worked with a co-worker's child, about the experience. What issues or conflicts arose? How were they solved? Are there any benefits, such as a reduced child care fee? Does your own workplace have policies on these issues? What steps could you take?

UNIT III

Learning Objectives

In Section A, "Wages and Benefits," students will learn about a variety of options available to administrators in addressing the need to improve wages and benefits for child care staff.

In Section B, "Program Policies and Procedures," students will learn about options in addressing the non-monetary needs of child care staff, including:

- written personnel, evaluation and grievance procedures
- finding substitutes and volunteers
- cooperative decision-making
- break policies
- sensitive, professional responses to accusations of child abuse

Discussion and Activities

- Visit several programs for young children. In addition to standard observation of the environment and philosophy, interview directors and teachers about staff salaries and benefits, personnel policies, occupational health and safety issues, program organization and/or funding sources. Compile a comparative report based on the results of this informal survey.

- Role-play an orientation meeting with a new employee, at which you explain program policies and sign a contract. Incorporate California law, and child care licensing regulations, into the discussion.

- Invite as guest speakers pioneers in the local community who have helped establish services for children and families. Or complete an oral history of such a person. Search out members of a variety of cultural groups. An alternative project would be to research the career of a past pioneer in early childhood education: what were the historical and social circumstances that influenced his or her work?

- Identify the social and mental health services network available for child care staff in the community. Discuss what administrators can do to create a more supportive framework for teachers.

- Design a center as a long-term project, in more advanced detail than the activity suggested in Unit I. Different individuals or teams could work on separate areas, such as licensing, developing promotional materials, personnel policies, budgeting of staff and other costs.

RESOURCES

Organizations

California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 809 Lincoln Way, San Francisco, CA 94122. (415) 661-1714.

California Children's Lobby, P.O. Box 448, Sacramento, CA 95802. (916) 444-7477.

California Community College Early Childhood Educators, c/o 1988-89 President Barbara Macci, Imperial Valley College, P.O. Box 158, Imperial, CA 92251.

Child Care Action Campaign, 132 West 43rd St., New York, NY 10036. (212) 354-5669.

Child Care Employee Project, P.O. Box 5603, Berkeley, CA 94705. (415) 653-9889.

Child Care Law Center, 22 Second St., 5th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105. (415) 495-5498.

Children's Defense Fund, 122 C Street NW, 4th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001. (800) 424-9602.

Council for Interracial Books for Children, 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10023.

Multicultural Project for Communication and Education, 71 Cherry St., Cambridge, MA 02139. (617) 492-1063.

National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. (800) 424-2460. NAEYC also has local chapters throughout the country.

National Black Child Development Institute, 1463 Rhode Island Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. (202) 387-1281.

School Age Child Care Project, Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA 02181. (617) 235-0320.

Readings

Baden, R., et al. School-Age Child Care: An Action Manual. Boston: Auburn House, 1982.

Burud, S., et al. Employer Supported Child Care. Boston: Auburn House, 1984.

Child Care Information Exchange. P.O. Box 2890, Redmond, WA 98073. Magazine for child care administrators, 6 issues/year. See L. Hostetler, "Putting Our Child Care Stills to Work in Advocacy" (Jan.-Feb. 1983), "How-To Guide for Advocates" (March-April 1983), and "Dealing With Our Ambivalence About Advocacy" (May 1988).

Clarke-Stewart, A. Daycare. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Fernandez, H. The Child Care Advocacy Handbook. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980.

Friedman, D. Encouraging Employer Support to Working Parents: Community Strategies for Change. New York: Center for Public Advocacy Research.

Grubb, W.N. and Lazerson, M. Broken Promises: How Americans Fail Their Children. New York: Basic Books, 1982.

Hymes, J. Living History Interviews. Book 2: "Care of the Children of Working Mothers," and Book 3: "Reaching Large Numbers of Children." Carmel, CA: Hacienda Press, 1979.

Katz, L. Talks With Teachers. Washington, D.C.: NAEYC, 1977.

Morgan, G. Managing the Day Care Dollars: A Financial Handbook. Cambridge, MA: Steam Press.

On the Capitol Doorstep, 926 J Street, Room 717, Sacramento, CA 95814. (916) 442-5431. Monthly newsletter on California state legislation, regulations and issues affecting children.

Phillips, D. (Ed.) Quality in Child Care: What Does Research Tell Us? Washington, D.C.: NAEYC, 1987.

Whitebook, M. "Caring for Children as Work" in Making Day Care Better. Fuqua, R. and Greenman, J. (Eds.). Teacher's College Press, 1984.

Zigler, E., et al. Children, Families and Government: Perspectives on American Social Policy. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Zinsser, G. Day Care's Unfair Burden: How Low Wages Subsidize a Public Service. New York: Center for Public Advocacy Research, 1986.

Audiovisual Materials

Who Cares for the Children? A one-hour PBS documentary on child care in America, first aired in April 1988. Contact your local PBS station.

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WORKING FOR QUALITY CHILD CARE

An Early Childhood Education Text
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UNIT I: TEACHING IN CHILD CARE TODAY

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WORKING FOR QUALITY

CHILD CARE

An Early Childhood Education Text
from the Child Care Employee Project

UNIT I: TEACHING IN CHILD CARE TODAY

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WORKING FOR QUALITY CHILD CARE

UNIT I: Teaching in Child Care Today

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UNIT I: TEACHING IN CHILD CARE TODAY

Introduction

Today, most young children in the United States have mothers who work outside the home. The need for reliable, quality child care for the children of working parents has soared over the past twenty years. But for many of the dedicated teachers who work to meet this need, child care remains an under-recognized and poorly paid profession.

A 1985 study by the National Association for the Education of Young Children found that "despite their level of education, women who provide child care are paid less than individuals who take care of animals, bartenders, parking lot attendants and amusement park attendants."

The Child Care Employee Project (CCEP) believes that this situation can be changed. Organized in 1977 by child care workers, CCEP is a non-profit advocacy organization working to improve the wages, status and working conditions of the child care profession. Thousands of child care workers, administrators and parents -- as well as government agencies, policy makers, employers and unions -- have come to CCEP for help on local and national issues affecting the child care workforce.

This text has grown out of a series of popular "handouts" which CCEP developed over the years in response to teachers' requests for practical, on-the-job help.

Unit I, "Teaching in Child Care Today," provides an overview of current issues facing the child care workforce, and highlights some successful strategies for change. Some of the articles here, written in the late 1970's and early 1980's, were included for historical perspective. To meet the need for more comprehensive, current data on the child care field, CCEP is now conducting a nationwide Child Care Staffing Study. Keep in touch with CCEP as new information comes in; we can be reached at P.O. Box 5603, Berkeley, CA 94705; (415) 653-9889.

A. Historical Overview:

State of the Field

Who Are Child Care Workers?

The Search for Answers

Subjects & Predicates

Rich Rosenkoetter

Deborah Phillips and Marcy Whitebook

You receive a call from the local newspaper. The reporter wants to interview you about the early childhood profession. Terrific! She starts by asking you how many early childhood teachers there are nationwide. Your throat goes dry and your hands start sweating. Already you can't answer a question, and it's so straightforward.

Your State's human services agency has agreed to review the salary schedule for child care workers in state-subsidized programs. They've asked you to prepare a summary paper that compares child care salaries in different states and contrasts them to the salaries for other comparable professions. You grab the opportunity, starting with a call to the U.S. Census Bureau. After an hour on the phone you are still trying to understand how they classify child care workers.

As two individuals who have tried to make sense of our national statistics on the child care workforce, these scenarios are all too familiar. It is a frustrating task, like negotiating a labyrinth with no exit. Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive, reliable information hinders the early childhood community's efforts to establish and promote its work as a vital profession.

Recognition of the importance of early childhood staff is increasing despite intolerably high turnover rates, a growing shortage of qualified personnel to fill vacancies, and persistent low morale among these underpaid, undervalued workers (Whitebook, 1986). The time seems ripe for a major initiative to improve the training, working conditions, pay, and, ultimately, the status of early childhood teachers.

Without accurate, basic data on the early childhood work force, however, advocacy efforts are handicapped. When we call for higher salaries, we are asked, "Higher than what?" When we state that job turnover is excessive, we are asked, "How excessive?" And, when we demand better benefits, we are asked, "What benefits do you get now?" Our answers come from local salary surveys conducted in a few regions across the country. Nationwide or even statewide figures do not exist. Informa-

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***Marcy Whitebook**, M.A., is Director of the Child Care Employee Project, a resource clearinghouse for child care staff seeking to upgrade their wages, status, and working conditions. For more information write to: CCEP, P.O. Box 5603, Berkeley, CA 94705*

Lois Main

Without accurate, basic data on the early childhood work force, advocacy efforts are handicapped.

Subjects & Predicates

tion on benefits and working conditions is even harder to find.

Public perceptions of the early childhood field also suffer from our inability to provide basic information about ourselves. We cannot tell people who we are. We do not even have an accurate count of early childhood teachers.

The need for a comprehensive, national, up-to-date data base on the early childhood work force is critical. It is up to us to demand that it be developed and to offer our assistance. This article is designed to launch this effort. We start with an overview of data from federal agencies, their definitions of the child care work force, and major limitations of these data. We then propose several first steps in an effort to develop an accurate, realistic national profile of our profession.

Entering the maze

It is very instructive to call the U.S. Bureau of the Census (Census) and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) with a set of basic questions about the early childhood work force. These two agencies collect most of the available information on our national labor force—its size; worker characteristics such as age, sex, race, and education; distribution of workers across occupations and industries; rates of employment and unemployment; salaries and income; and average hours of work (Table 1 summarizes the basic characteristics of the Census and BLS data).

Let's start with basic information on the number of early childhood providers. The Census will tell you that there were 677,000 of us in 1984. You'll immediately question this number. And rightly so. The National Day Care Study (Divine-Hawkins, 1981) counted 1.8 million family day care homes, with one provider each, almost 10 years ago. Add to this our own 1985 count of 67,000 child care centers (NAEYC, 1986), each of which employs multiple staff, and you are well above the 677,000 figure from Census.

Well, you are told, there were an additional 383,000 child care workers who worked in private households. That helps, but your total is still well below what other sources would lead you to believe. Maybe you should add the 330,000 individuals classified as "Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Teachers," as differentiated from "Child Care Workers." That brings your grand total to 1,393,000 early childhood teachers in 1984, which still falls short of the 1.8 million partial count in 1977.

Moving on to salary information, the situation seems to improve—at first. You learn that the median annual earnings of full-time child care workers was $9,204 in 1984, unless they worked in a private household, in which case they earned $4,420. This compares to the poverty level of $10,610. So, the Census agrees

blue
green
purple
orange
brown
black

Elaine M Ward

Stereotypes of child care staff who "remove outer garments" and preschool staff who "instruct children in preparation for primary school" abound

with the reports from salary surveys and with the experience of the field: Child care workers, as a whole, are not even earning poverty level wages.

Now that you have some interesting data, you call the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to confirm the numbers. You learn that individuals working in "child day care services" earned an average $5.04 per hour in 1985. But the Census told you that child care workers earned $3.22 per hour in 1980. It's hard to believe that the earnings of child care workers could increase so quickly.

You decide to ask about job turnover. First they ask if you want separation rates or transfers or both. Given what you learned from your efforts to get a total count of child care workers, you ask for both, rather than try to figure out the difference between separations and transfers. The answer is astounding: Child care workers have the highest rates of turnover of all occupations. Between 1980 and 1990, 42% of all child care workers will need to be replaced each year, just to maintain the current supply of child care providers. You knew things were bad from the salary surveys that showed turnover rates between 15% and 30%. Now the federal government has added 12% to this. Why are these numbers different? Which numbers should you believe?

To summarize what you have learned so far, the Census count shows that there are about 1.4 million child care workers nationwide, even though this doesn't even account for all of the family day care providers 10 years ago. You also know that people working in child care earned either $3.22 per hour in 1980 or $5.04 per hour in 1985, but they probably didn't earn both. And, you know that turnover rates are very high, maybe 15% or maybe 42%.

Tackling the definitions

As you ponder these numbers, you begin to wonder if the problem lies with how the Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics define early childhood professionals. The Census provides numbers of child care workers from three different categories: (1) Child Care Worker, Private Household, (2) Child Care

Worker, Except Private Household, and (3) Teacher, Prekindergarten and Kindergarten. That's a start. Now all you have to do is figure out who fits where.

Child Care Worker, Private Household includes any individual who provides child care in a private home, either the child's home or the provider's home. That sounds like in-home providers and family day care providers. But, it also includes part-time babysitters.

Child Care Worker, Except Private Household would appear to include everyone else. But, there's a third category: *Teacher, Prekindergarten and Kindergarten*. How does this differ from Child Care Workers who work outside of private households? Child Care Workers, Except Private Household work in out-of-home child care settings such as centers, nursery schools, preschools, and child development programs. Teachers, Prekindergarten (which cannot be counted separate from Teachers, Kindergarten) also work in preschools, day care centers, and child development programs. Where's the distinction?

You really have to dig for the answer. An arcane volume called the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (nicknamed the DOT) lists specific job descriptions for the occupational categories used by the Census and the BLS (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1977). The answer revealed by the DOT is reminiscent of the worst stereotypes that create artificial distinctions between caring and learning, and place child care several notches below teaching on the status continuum.

According to the DOT, Child Care Workers "read aloud," "organize activities of prekindergarten children," "teach children in simple painting, drawing, and songs," "direct children in eating, resting, and toileting," "maintain discipline," and "help children to remove outer garments." Prekindergarten Teachers "plan group activities to stimulate learning," "instruct children in activities designed to promote social, physical and intellectual growth," and "prepare children for primary school." The use of the term "instruct" is restricted to preschool teachers, and descriptions of nonacademic responsibilities are reserved for child care workers.

This is not only aggravating and inaccurate, it also poses serious problems for our efforts to obtain a statistical profile of early childhood professionals. Specifically, foster parents and grandparents, lunchroom and playground monitors in elementary and secondary schools, attendants in residential institutions, and school bus attendants are counted under "Child Care Worker, Except Private Household." There is no way to separate these workers from individuals we would define as early childhood teachers.

Perhaps the Bureau of Labor Statistics can improve on this situation. Alas, not only does the same distinction between caring and teaching exist, but the BLS places all Child Care Workers in a category that includes staff of residential institutions and schools for the handicapped.

If you think this is confusing and illogical, try asking about resource and referral professionals. They may be categorized as a Child Care Worker or maybe as a Social Service Technician by the Census, or as a Social Worker by the BLS. Professionals who work with abused children in respite care programs may fall under Social Welfare Service Aid (BLS) or just Welfare Service Aid (Census). Finally, directors of early education programs theoretically fall under Education Administrator in both the Census and BLS systems. This merges them with university deans, principals, directors of education in prisons and directors of university admissions, among others.

Where does this leave us? We know that preschool teachers and child care workers may be the same people who simply choose to describe themselves differently. In the information available, sterotypes of child care staff who "remove outer garments" and preschool staff who "instruct children in preparation for primary school" abound. Kindergarten teachers cannot be separated from prekindergarten teachers, and early childhood directors cannot be separated from university presidents. Family day care providers and resource and referral staff can fall almost anywhere.

Beyond data and definitions

Maybe there is a clue in the salary data that will solve this puzzle. The Bureau of Labor Statistics mentioned "Child Day Care Services." Could this be the missing link?

The answer to this question calls attention to several important distinctions between data collected by the Census and that collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unfortunately, it also makes the picture even more complicated.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census collects all of its data from individuals, or "households" in the language of the Census. People report their own living arrangements, occupations, earnings, child care arrangements, and so on. The Bureau of Labor Statistics collects information from employers, or business "establishments." For example, the BLS asks employers what they pay their employees, whereas the

Table 1

Summary of information from the Bureau of the Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics

	Census	**BLS**
Information sources	Households individuals	Work establishments State employment agencies
Definitions	*Child Care Workers, Private Household:* In-home and family day care providers.	*Child Care Workers:* provide child care in centers, nursery schools, work sites, residential institutions, and schools for the handicapped. Also includes babysitters.
	Child Care Workers, Except Private Household: provide child care in out-of-home settings, including foster parents, lunchroom & playroom monitors, schoolbus attendants.	*Teacher, Preschool and Kindergarten:* provide educational services in a nursery school, preschool, kindergarten, or other group setting defined as a school.
	Teachers, Prekindergarten and Kindergarten: provide educational services in a nursery school, preschool, kindergarten, or other group setting defined as a school.	
Major surveys	*Dienniel Census:* survey of all U.S. households; every 10 years.	*Current Employment Survey:* monthly survey of payroll records from sampling of businesses.
	Current Population Survey: monthly survey of sampling of 60,000 households; core questions asked every month & supplemental questions added in certain months (e.g., June 1982—child care arrangements).	*Occupation and Employment Survey:* mail survey conducted by state employment offices of nonfarm businesses, on a 3-year cycle.
Other characteristics	All self-report data of principal occupation; includes only individuals with earnings.	No self-employed or private household workers, or workers without earnings included.

Census collects information from individuals on what they are paid.

This explains some of the discrepancies between BLS and Census data. Because the BLS goes to employers for its information, no data are collected on self-employed workers or unpaid family workers. This information comes only from the Census. Yet, the Census data also exclude workers without earnings. As a result, child care providers who are not paid or who exchange services in a cooperative fashion are not included in any national count of the early childhood work force. Also, the Census asks individuals to report only their principal occupation. As a result, private family day care and in-home providers are probably undercounted by the BLS and the Census. Moreover, individuals who split their work year between child care provision and a more established career or who provide very part-time child care in addition to another job, may not be recorded among the population of child care workers if they do not consider child care their primary occupation.

Finally, both the BLS and the Census collect information on the number of employees in various occupations, average hours of work, and average hourly and weekly earnings. However, the BLS reports this information by industry, characterized by the major project or activity of the work site, and the Census reports it by occupation, characterized by the training and responsibilities of a specific job. "Child Day Care Services" is an industry classification, whereas "Child Care Worker" is an occupation code. Some people employed in Child Day Care Services are Child Care Workers and some are not. Some Child Care Workers are employed in Child Day Care Services and some are not.

Proposals for change

You are probably throwing up your hands and thinking, "What a mess!" You're right. Our major national statistical agencies demonstrate little understanding of the early childhood profession in the ways they collect and report employment data. Data from the Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics are difficult to compare, creating mismatched pieces of information. The two agencies use different definitions; not widely different, but different enough to create tremendous confusion. And, not surprisingly, the information that emerges from this maze often makes no sense, given what we already know about the early childhood work force. Furthermore the portrait masks important distinctions within the work force with regard to type of service, job titles, and level of experience and responsibility.

We need a national profile of our profession to assess the extent of the problems that plague it, to formulate realistic goals, and to measure improvement. We need to examine the variables that influence the recruitment and maintenance of an adequately prepared child care work force. Clarification is necessary if those outside the child care community are to develop a realistic image of the field. We also need ready answers when parents, reporters, and policy makers ask us about ourselves.

Admittedly, defining the child care work force challenges even those most familiar with its intricacies. As we know from NAEYC's attempts to establish a consistent nomenclature within the field, assigning job titles which satisfy even a majority of the community's members is a Herculean task. And, because the field is growing and changing so quickly, it is difficult to track changing assumptions.

> It is more important than ever that information about the child care community accurately portray who we are rather than reflect and reinforce long held and damaging stereotypes.

In many professions, government data are both supplemented and are enriched by data collected by professional or other organizations linked to a specific work force. Given the limited resources of both federal agencies and the early childhood community, it is perhaps most realistic to develop an agenda for change based on dual responsibility for the much needed information. Within the field, examining our practices and priorities will help us develop better vehicles for collecting information about ourselves. We must also commit ourselves to working with federal agencies to insure that the data collected will be accurate and useful. Following are some preliminary recommendations which address communication between the field and government agencies, and suggest future agendas for improving data collection.

Review mechanisms

Efforts to influence the way information is collected must necessarily focus on the BLS and the Census since these are the only two sources of regular national data collection. We recommend that a review panel be established to guide these agencies' efforts to clarify their current data collection system. Panel members should include experts from the early childhood community, social demographers, labor force specialists, and survey researchers. The panel's central task should be to critique the current data collection system and to formulate more accurate categories and definitions.

Following a revision of the current system, an ongoing advisory committee of early childhood experts should be established to work with federal agencies. Its functions should include informing the agencies about significant changes in the field, assisting with the interpretation of data, and assuring that new information is disseminated to the early childhood field.

Pressing issues

A newly established review panel will immediately confront certain problems to address. We need:

1. *An accurate count of the number of child care providers.* This may be accomplished through the development of more accurate and consistent definitions of who provides care.

2. *Labels based on the field as it now is.* Whereas 20 years ago many people would have classified child care work as a noneducational service, this is no longer the case. Yet there is no explicit mention of educational activities in the occupational definitions of child care worker. Rather, those early childhood workers considered to be ed-

ucators fall into the classification of preschool kindergarten teacher. A major first step is to redefine the occupational categories into which child care professionals fall.

3. *Clarification of salary data based on 12 month versus 9 month positions.* Preschool and kindergarten teachers face tremendous distinctions with regard to their typical work year, as well as in their pay rate. The current coupling of this information makes much of the data about both groups of educators misleading.

4. *Job categories that reflect differences in education and experience.* Currently there is no way to distinguish between starting and career level salaries, nor to assess whether there is a logical relation between salaries, turnover, and the average education and experience of workers in a particular job category. Comparisons of different careers with varying salaries are also difficult to interpret without an understanding of the education and experience of their work forces.

5. *Data on enrollment in training programs and final job choices of students.* Without this information it is impossible to plan for the projected growth of the child care work force.

Research agenda

For many years the child care community has relied upon findings of the National Day Care Study (NDCS) to answer questions about both the quality of services and the characteristics of those who provide them. But the NDCS was conducted almost a decade ago. The time is ripe for a new, national study that examines growth in the field. It should examine major indicators of the health of the early childhood profession, such as recruitment and turnover. Additionally, data are needed on variables that affect these major indicators, such as wages, training, benefits, and hours of uncompensated work.

Within the child care community, national organizations like NAEYC and the new National Resource and Referral Association could coordinate discussion about the profession and the information we need. For example, efforts might be made to work with foundations to support research in this area and to develop consistent guidelines and resources for early childhood institutions such as resource and referral programs and NAEYC Affiliates, to assist their local information-gathering efforts.

Child care is fast becoming a major institution in the lives of American families. As a result there is growing concern and interest about in whose hands we are placing our children. It is more important than ever that information about the child care community accurately portray who we are rather than reflect and reinforce long held and damaging stereotypes. As we formulate efforts to upgrade status and advocate for more resources, accurate data will be a major ingredient in our reform efforts. We must be ready to answer essential questions about who we are. Only then will we be equipped to discuss who we want to become. **YC**

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VIEWPOINT

The Teacher SHORTAGE

A Professional Precipice

Marcy Whitebook

Before attending NAEYC's 1985 Annual Conference, I assumed the hot topics of conversation there would be child abuse and insurance rates. I was wrong. The talk in sessions and in the corridors was of the teacher shortage—how programs are having difficulty filling job openings, especially for experienced teachers. This issue threatens the child care community with a series of catastrophic setbacks, but, at the same time, it offers enormous possibilities. The teacher shortage is both a symptom of terrible problems and a major opportunity.

At the conference I constantly heard program directors talk of spending inordinate amounts of time trying to locate and train qualified staff. Teachers spoke of suffering from increasing stress that stems from the additional workload required to orient one new coworker after another. Although the problem is a national one, centers in some regions, especially those with low unemployment and high costs of living, are encountering the greatest difficulty in adequately staffing their programs. In states where training requirements for child care personnel are minimal, often the shortage is experienced at the director level.

Why is there a shortage?

The causes of the teacher shortage reflect dramatic changes occurring in American family life, as well as fundamental characteristics of our profession. The stiff competition for trained staff results in part from the rapid growth in child care services we have witnessed during the last 15 years. This growing demand is expected to continue well into the next decade due to the large influx of mothers of young children into the labor market. As a result, the child care workforce is expected to expand dramatically. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a growth rate for preschool teachers during the next decade of between 38% and 44%, compared to a 23% to 28% increase for the labor force as a whole (Silvestri, Lukasiewitz, & Einstein, 1983).

Compounding the demand for more early childhood staff is the existence of an elementary school teacher shortage in many communities throughout the country. At a time when more than half of our nation's teachers are approaching retirement age, school enrollment is on the rise.

Aggravating the problem further is a decreasing interest in educational careers among college students. Relatively low wages and low professional status in education lead college graduates to seek more lucrative employment in other service fields. For those early childhood staff with bachelor's degrees and/or credentials, public school jobs are an attractive option. Nationwide the average *starting* salary for public school teachers is $14,500, more than many child care teachers earn after years on the job (Williams, Howard, McDonald, & Michael, 1984). Average salaries for experienced public school teachers are even higher, ranging from $17,263 in the South to $23,988 in the West (Educational Research Service, 1984).

We cannot, however, simply ascribe the shortage of experienced

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child care teachers to either demographic changes or to the teacher shortage affecting higher grades. The inability to attract and retain qualified personnel reflects deep-rooted problems within our profession.

Our continual need for experienced teachers stems in part from the high turnover rate in the field. Studies conducted by local groups across the country have found turnover rates ranging from 20% to 30% a year in various communities (Child Care Employee Project, 1984). The most recent data from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (Day Care U.S.A., 1984) reveals a 42% turnover rate nationally in a 12-month period from 1980 to 1981 for workers in child care centers, nursery schools, Head Start, and other child care professions (except family day care, which has an even higher turnover rate). Child care ranks with dishwashing, peddling, and pumping gas as occupations least able to retain personnel.

Poor compensation not only fuels turnover within programs, it also forces trained staff to leave the field altogether. Few can afford to turn down public school salaries, especially when coupled with pension plans, health benefits, and summer vacations—even if their preference is to work with younger children. Little economic incentive exists for experienced teachers to make a life-long career commitment to early childhood education.

What does the future hold?

Forecasting is a tricky business. But it is clear that without an all-out effort to improve compensation and status, child care will become a less and less attractive career choice despite the many inherently gratifying aspects of working with young children. The most likely and scariest prospect is that the pressure will build at a faster pace to lower standards for child care personnel—some of which are already frighteningly inadequate in many states—in order to fill teaching vacancies.

Our efforts to fight child care's image as a custodial service will be set back significantly as more and more programs come to resemble fast food chains with their revolving door staffing patterns. The insidious cycle of low status and wages leading to higher turnover and lower standards will continuously accelerate.

What can we do?

Attempts to break the cycle require a taxing, two-fold strategy. At the program level, we have to shoulder training responsibilities that should not exist, but do. Many early childhood students now enter the job market during or before their course of study, rather than after. This requires the use of new methods of instruction geared to those already working in programs. In-service training must accomplish the dual task of orienting new staff not just to a particular center, but to child development theory and standard early childhood practices. Additionally, relatively novice staff need guidance in how to supervise their less experienced coworkers.

The second part of the strategy is the broader political assault. A greater percentage of our resources must be dedicated to overcoming the financial and political obstacles that plague us. At our conferences and in our periodicals, and, most importantly, in our advocacy efforts, we need to move the issue of salaries to the very top of our agenda. Some of us have already begun to do so. Advocates in Massachusetts successfully managed to get $5 million to upgrade wages in publicly funded programs. More is promised for next year, along with increased subsidies to help parents afford increased costs. We need to examine how this was accomplished and experiment with other approaches.

The paradox of the teacher shortage is that it situates our profession on a precipice. If we do not act to alter the conditions which create our personnel scarcity, we will become the unskilled, fast-food workers that some believe we already are. But if we are focused and organized, this same shortage, coupled with an increased demand for child care services, will give us enormous opportunities to educate the public and advocate for support that reflects our true worth. Ultimately at stake is not only our well-being, but the quality of services America's children will receive for years to come.

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WAGE WOES

Our child care system is facing a crisis. More and more parents need affordable, quality care for their children, but child care programs find themselves less and less able to attract and retain qualified staff. Years of research have shown that the quality of child care depends on having trained, consistent caregivers with whom children can develop secure attachments; however, staff turnover is currently estimated at 40 to 60% per year nationwide (the average turnover rate for all occupations is 19.4%).

In spite of an average education level of 14 years, 70% of all child care workers earn poverty level wages, making child care employees the second most underpaid workers in the nation (National Committee on Pay Equity, 1987). These inadequate wages, coupled with low status and stressful working conditions on the job, provide little incentive for experienced child care staff to make a long-term commitment to their careers.

Few national studies of child care workers have been undertaken. But in 1985, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) released some startling data in their paper, "In Whose Hands?: A Demographic Fact Sheet on Child Care Providers." NAEYC found that 90% of child care workers in private households, and 58% of all other child care workers, earned poverty-level wages. The median income for full-time workers was $9,204 per year; for in-home providers, $4,420. Half of those surveyed reported working overtime hours every week without pay. One-half of all providers at most were estimated to receive any health benefits.

A myth persists that people care for young children as charitable volunteers, expecting little in return, or merely to add "pin money" to their household income. But as far back as 1977, the National Day Care Study found that 30% of center-based child care workers were the sole income earners for their families, and 70% provided more than half of their families' income. About 25% of family day care providers were single wage earners.

While the demand for child care workers is expected to rise 41% between 1982 and 1995, wages and benefits are not keeping pace. Between 1975 and 1985, hourly earnings in the service sector as a whole increased at nearly three times the rate of child care.

"Despite their level of education," NAEYC found, "women who provide child care are paid less than individuals who take care of animals, bartenders, parking lot attendants, and amusement park attendants."

Other findings from around the country:

- Most Seattle-area child care staff earn $3.35 to $5.00 an hour (1987).

- 89% of Oregon's child care workers have no health benefits (1987).

- 17% of the teachers at full-day centers in the Madison, Wisconsin area find it necessary to hold a second job (1986).

- Full-day centers in southern Alameda County, California, have an annual turnover rate of 57% for teachers, and 43% for assistants (1986). In northern Alameda County, 50% of child care staff work without written contracts or formal grievance procedures (1987).

- In a 1984 survey of child care workers in the Ann Arbor, Michigan area, more than half reported working more than 4 hours a week overtime without pay; 57% received no health insurance and no breaks. The average wage for child care teachers who had graduated from college was $5.66 an hour, compared to a range of $9.98 to $18.09 an hour for public school teachers. 95% of those surveyed said they liked their jobs, but only about one third were satisfied with their salaries, benefits and opportunities to advance.

- A September 1986 New York state survey of child care workers found that head teachers on average were paid $9.14 an hour in New York City but only $4.98 elsewhere in the state, even though 84% of them were college-educated. Even in New York City, head teachers' average wage fell below that of housekeepers and bartenders, and was only slightly higher than that of hotel clerks. The annual teacher turnover rate was 40%. Most teachers had held their current jobs for three years or less.

"I love working with children and sharing teaching and creatively learning with them," wrote one New York teacher, "but I cannot live as a single person in my early thirties on this salary."

"I have the responsibility for a multi-site operation that serves over 160 families," wrote a director, "and I don't even make what a beginning city school teacher makes. I'm beginning to wonder why I'm here myself . . . we have lost 11 teachers this past year."

"We have a situation," the New York researchers concluded, "where child care workers are subsidizing the cost of day care. Child care would be much more expensive if wages were fair, and yet many families can hardly afford prices at current levels."

* * *

As overwhelming as this situation may seem, child care advocates are beginning to make significant progress in obtaining better wages and benefits. (See the pamphlet, "Raising Salaries: Strategies That Work.") We are finally reaching a national consensus that improving child care and upgrading the child care profession are everyone's responsibilities. Most families today need child care, and in the long term, everyone touched by the need must contribute to the solution, including government, parents, employers and unions.

But in the short run, some improvements can be made with little expenditure of funds. Sliding fee scales, parent involvement in fundraising for staff benefits (instead of new equipment), paying staff for unused but budgeted sick days, and developing written job descriptions and contracts, are all efforts which cost little but signify lots of respect for workers. Collecting data on wages and benefits is another important first step (see "Salary Surveys").

Most importantly, child care workers must raise awareness of their needs among parents, legislators and other policy makers. Contact the Child Care Employee Project for help in advocating for the compensation and the respect which all child care workers deserve.

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Who's Minding the Child Care Workers?:

A Look at Staff Burn-out

by Marcy Whitebook, Carollee Howes, Rory Darrah and Jane Friedman

Photo: Jean Berlfein

According to the National Day Care Study, which investigated quality and cost in child care centers in the United States, about 40 percent of the approximately 200,000 day care workers earn close to or less than the minimun wage, despite their considerable training and education.[1] The turnover rate at most centers is 15 to 20 percent a year—a rate which exceeds the national average of 10 percent for most workers in human services fields.[2] This annual exit of many trained and committed workers—primarily women under 40, about a third of whom are ethnic minorities—gnaws away at the morale of those left behind.

Burn-out, the phenomenon whereby an energetic staff person loses interest in her or his work and becomes likely to quit, is currently the focus of much debate in child care circles.

The conditions leading to burn-out tend to be viewed from three different perspectives.[3] J. Freudenberger and M. Mattingly suggest that it is the nature of the work itself that produces the condition: the necessarily intensive interaction between adult and child is thought to become more draining and less gratifying over time. Thus, one solution to burn-out involves diversifying the type of work people in centers perform so that there are breaks from constant direct work with children.

Freudenberger, M. Reed and B. Sutton contend that those who enter the field have personality types which lead them to burn out: staff members are seen as people with unconscious needs to come to terms with their own troubled childhood experiences and, when unsuccessful, they "burn out." A variation of this view suggests that those who engage in this work are idealistic and highly motivated to improve conditions for young children, but they "burn out" because they do not have a realistic sense of their own ability to create positive change.[4] The cure based on this second perspective involves a new emphasis on self-awareness in training programs.

Finally, in identifying factors that may be influential in causing or alleviating burn-out, C. Maslach and A. Pines found that lower ratios of adults to children, more dependable breaks, the availability of substitutes and better communication among staff members can positively affect workers' experience and, therefore, their ability to perform the job with less stress.

Although all of these views contribute to an understanding of burn-out, we believe that these explanations are insufficient. Our experiences as child care workers suggest that the working conditions—particularly low pay, lack of benefits and unpaid overtime—contribute significantly to workers' job dissatisfac-

tion. Furthermore, working conditions in most occupations are closely tied to one's job title as well as to the program's source of funding. In this light, we wondered whether burn-out and turnover occur at different rates among staff at different levels and at different centers.

The little information available on child care staffs has frequently been based on information gleaned through observation; we have little direct knowledge of the experience and perceptions of those who actually do the work. To explore how child care workers themselves understand their work experience and the burn-out problem, we interviewed 95 staff members of full- and half-day programs in 32 of San Francisco's 165 child care centers.

The study centers were randomly selected and included public programs (those run by the school district as well as Head Start and others receiving public funds) and private centers, both non-profit and proprietary.

The interviews, which were conducted by phone in 1978 and 1979, consisted of open-ended questions and scaled items. The latter were used to obtain information about staff members' training, experience and education, job responsibilities, wages, hours of paid and unpaid work and benefits; and the center structure, including the adult to child ratio, breaks, policy on substitutes, frequency of staff meetings and the topics discussed, and the decision making process.

Open-ended questions sought to determine the sources of tension and satisfaction, the frequency of and reasons for turnover and the changes staff members would like to see made in their centers. Information about budgets and funding sources was solicited from the center administrators.

Study Results

One-third of the staff members interviewed were head teacher-directors, one-third were teachers and another third, aides or teaching assistants. Although the head teacher-directors performed some administrative functions, all spent considerable time with children. Eighty-nine percent were women and half of those interviewed were members of ethnic minorities, most of whom held positions as aides or assistants.

Compared to the national average, the day care workers in our study were very highly educated. The National Day Care Study found that 54 percent of child care workers had completed some post-secondary education. However, among those we interviewed, 96 percent had completed some college work. Seventy percent had earned bachelor's degrees, with 45 percent completing some additional coursework, and 17 percent held master's degrees.

Those in our sample had also accumulated extensive work experience. Seventy percent had worked in the child care field for three years or more, and more than half (56 percent) had five years' experience or more.

Wages, Benefits and Hours

According to the National Day Care Study, average annual wages for

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head teachers and teacher s aides in 1978 were $7.180 and $4.940, respectively for full-time work. We had predicted that those in our sample would earn more than the national average both because of their high level of experience and education and because they were from an urban California community a setting known for public financial support for child care

While our data did reveal wages higher than the national average the workers in our study still placed among the lower 10 percent of adult wage earners [6] Nearly 30 percent had gross monthly incomes of $500 or less about 32 percent earned between $500 and $800 a month, and only 14 percent had gross earnings of over $1.000 a month

The centers funding source and staff members job classification emerged as the basis for wage differentials in our sample. Staff members in private centers were most likely to earn the lowest wages and although those working in publicly funded programs had higher wages, staff in public school centers were the only ones to net over $800 a month. Through unionization, staff members classified as teachers had won parity in pay and benefits with elementary school teachers.[7] These public school employees were the only unionized employees in our sample and are among the few currently unionized child care personnel nationwide [8]

Aides consistently earned less than those classified as teachers and head teacher directors (Two-thirds of aides and teaching assistants earned $500 a month or less, compared to about a quarter of teachers and head teacher directors.) Although aides had less formal education than other staff, their own educational levels (88 percent had taken some college courses) were considerably higher than the national average. In this light, their low wages are particularly striking

Wages were further reduced by the recurring and informal process of workers in all positions personally purchasing supplies for their centers. Sixty percent contributed as much as $10 each month of their own money for supplies because of the inadequate budgets in their centers

Staff members in publicly funded centers were more likely to receive medical coverage and they also received more paid holidays and sick days and longer paid vacations than those in private (particularly proprietary) centers. In our sample, about half received no medical coverage and 16 percent had no paid sick leave. Staff members with the lowest wages—those working in private centers and aides—received the fewest benefits

Low pay and minimal benefits were not compensated for by a relatively short work week. On the contrary, the majority (63 percent) of the staff members in our sample worked several hours each week without pay in addition to their full-time jobs. Unpaid hours involved curriculum planning and preparation, meetings, parent contacts and general center maintenance. Almost half received no compensation for extra hours worked

Responsibilities

Although job titles did reflect differences in pay benefits and educational level, they indicated little about the types of tasks performed by staff members of different rank. Head teacher directors, teachers and aides all engaged in the same range of duties: curriculum planning and implementation, meal preparation, center maintenance, communication with parents and clerical and administrative tasks. The only difference was that the head teacher directors spent more time talking with parents and performing clerical and administrative work

All teaching staff members had limited input and involvement in major policy decisions, such as hiring, firing and budget allocation. Only 18 percent of those interviewed said that they were included in major decision making, and over half expressed dissatisfaction with their center s hierarchical policy structures: they found policy makers often ill informed and/or insensitive to the ramifications of their decisions

All staff members, however, were more involved in making day-to-day decisions concerning actual work with children, communication with parents and division of staff responsibilities. Approximately two-thirds of the teachers and head teacher directors made decisions in these areas. Although teachers and aides spent equal time with children, only 37 percent of the aides were involved in making day-to-day decisions. Aides were dissatisfied with this process because their input was disregarded despite their perceived parity in responsibility. Teachers, however, were pleased with their autonomy in this aspect of their jobs

Job Satisfaction

Intense personal contact with children and adults — the essence of child care work — has been claimed to fuel the turnover rate in the field. In contrast to this assertion, 78 percent of those we interviewed reported that it was aspects of the direct work with children which most engaged and pleased them about their jobs — immediate feedback, physical contact with children, facilitating and observing a child's growth, and related opportunities for self reflection. Other sources of job satisfaction included relations with other staff members (learning how to communicate with and depend on each other), autonomy and flexibility ("no two days are alike") and the opportunity to learn and grow on the job.

When asked to state what they liked least about their jobs and to identify sources of tension in their work, low pay and unpaid hours were cited. Staff-child ratio, hours of direct work with children, breaks, mechanisms for input and flexibility of center structure were also all correlated with staff members' perception of job dissatisfaction.

Although by law California workers are entitled to a 15-minute paid break for every four hours of work, more than a third (37 percent) of those in our study did not receive it. Moreover, 38 percent of those who did receive breaks found them inadequate because there was too limited a staff to cover for them.

The National Day Care Study recommended acceptable enrollment-based adult-child ratios ranging from 1 to 8 to 1 to 10. Although two-thirds of the staff members in our sample worked in centers with adult-child ratios of less than 1 to 10, 57 percent felt that their center ratio only occasionally allowed for individual work with children. Seventy-eight percent of proprietary centers in our sample had ratios of over 1 to 10—and the fact that staff members in these centers were mostly likely to perceive children as a source of tension may be linked to their higher adult-child ratios.

Other less pressing reasons were mentioned as contributing to job dissatisfaction. Cleaning, washing dishes and food preparation were noted as distasteful aspects of maintenance work, and while staff relations were also cited as a source of satisfaction, close working conditions sometimes served to exacerbate differences in educational philosophy and/or personal values.

Workers in private centers were more likely than those in public programs to feel some tension on their jobs, and full-day program staff were more likely than half-day staff to say that they experienced tension. Head teacher/directors, who were more likely than aides or teachers to say that they felt tension, tended to mention the diversity of their responsibilities as the source—a factor which suggests that stress may be tied to the additional tasks that accompany increased authority. Finally, in many cases, the pay and benefits of head teacher/directors were not significantly higher than those of other staff members, although they often had more training. Thus, their tensions may also reflect conflict about career expectations.

Job Security and Turnover

Staff members in our study tended to switch centers often. At the time of the interviews, 37 percent had been at their current jobs for a year or less and 30 percent for one to three years.

Differences in turnover rates appear to be correlated with job structure and working conditions. Part-time program staff members—those with higher wages, better adult-child ratios and less intense work environments—had the lowest turnover rates, while the rates were highest for staff in proprietary centers—those with the highest adult-child ratios, the worst working conditions, fewest benefits and most stated tension.

Staff members most frequently cited underpayment as the cause of staff turnover. Lack of mobility within the field was also noted; 58 percent felt there was no opportunity for advancement in their jobs. Given the lack of opportunity for securing better jobs in the field, it is hardly surprising that 20 percent of those interviewed said that they expected to leave child care work in the next year. Only a quarter saw themselves as making a lifetime commitment to work in the field, despite their education and training in this area. Finally, cutbacks or threats of layoffs coupled with high unemployment were seen as undermining their ability to stay at any one job or in their field.

Conclusions

The results of this study confirm the commonly held assumption that child care staff are underpaid and overworked. Furthermore, the study clarified the significance of differences with respect to working conditions and job satisfaction, job title, center funding source and length of program day. Our data also suggest that the high turnover and burn-out rates among child care personnel are closely tied to stressful working conditions. In other words, the results suggest a new understanding of how an enthusiastic worker gradually loses his or her eagerness and becomes fatigued, irritable and likely to quit.

We recognize burn-out as a complex process influenced by the interplay of many factors, including the intense nature of the work, the needs of those attracted to the field and the specific structure of child care centers. Our research indicates, however, that burn-out is less an intrinsic element of the child care worker's personality or activity than a function of the *context* in which the work itself is performed. By context we include not only the particular structure of a given institution but also the larger social forces—available money, resources and prevailing attitudes toward programs and caretakers—that affect institutional policy.

We are not suggesting that higher wages, more benefits, and better adult-child ratios alone will eliminate burn-out and turnover in the field. But in view of our findings and experience, we suggest that working conditions is the area in which to begin making changes.

Many agree that working conditions need to be improved but argue that improvements are not possible in times of economic recession. We believe that, given limited resources, it is necessary to differentiate between those changes that can be made in working conditions which demand immediate funds and those which do not. The following suggestions are made with the acknowledgment that more money is both needed and difficult to obtain.

Changes Within Centers

Previously noted studies of burn-out in child care have included valuable suggestions for changes. Among them are the introduction of a greater variety of tasks, reduction of the number of hours working directly with children, increased vehicles for peer support and communication among staff members and the establishment of small "familial groups" within larger centers. Three additional suggestions emerge from our survey.

- *Increased Staff Involvement in Decision Making.* Staffs with more input and involvement in decision making appear to be more satisfied with their jobs. Methods should be developed to involve staff members in policy making and in such decisions as hiring. An ongoing evaluation process to assess staff and administration and to inform administrators of the implications of their decisions is also needed. A well-functioning grievance policy written into staff contracts is basic to developing this involvement. However, lower level staff members must be guaranteed "immunity" when sharing their ideas, reactions and grievances.

- *Job Title Distinctions.* Much tension in centers revolves around conflicts over distinctions in title and pay without equal distinction in the actual work performed. Centers should reexamine their structures and title assignations. Are the distinctions based on differences in skill and experience? Or do they reflect the lack of mobility in a field which values on-the-job training and is unable to offer upward mobility in terms of pay? Open examination of these questions may spark ideas about how to equalize limited resources and implement job definitions based on skill and experience. It will also allow for shared recognition of inequities.

- *Break and Substitute Policy.* Attitudes of staff and administration can greatly affect a center's policy regarding the use of breaks and substitutes. For example, many may feel that the need to stay home "with only a cold" is a sign of weakness or lack of commitment. Acknowledgement of the value of breaks on the job and staying home when ill can lead to greater cooperation between staff and administration. Slight adjustments in scheduling can enable workers to have 15-minute respites; a substitute policy agreed upon by all staff members—one which does not leave arrangements to the sick staff member or the person on the floor—is another useful step.

Changes Beyond the Center

Currently there are only two methods of increasing child care resources: charging parents more money or cutting center costs. The former approach does not take into account the fact that many women pay almost as much for child care as they earn[9]—and the latter approach runs up against a "Catch 22." Currently, 70 to 90 percent of center budgets is spent on salaries. The only real method of saving money, cutting salaries, would defeat the purpose of obtaining the money—that is, to increase salaries and benefits to help deal with the problem of burn-out. Thus, to meet the needs of child care staff for a decent income and of parents for affordable services, either government or industry will have to bear its share of the costs.[10]

Obtaining increased financial support will require changing the prevailing view that child care is unskilled work and enhancing public appreciation of it. As long as child care work is considered unskilled, this will be reflected in its pay and status.

Thus, already overworked child care staff members must join together to inform the public about their work's value and the level of skill required. This involves informing legislators and policymakers of work conditions and defining the minimum employment standards that need to be included in future legislation and guides for establishing centers. It requires pressuring organizations which represent child care workers, like the National Association for the Education of Young Children, to focus more of their resources on working conditions. Finally, organizations might be created to help workers share ideas about break and substitute policies, contracts and health insurance, and to offer workers support.

Amelioration of the situation which leads to burn-out requires changes within centers and in the broader community. Tackling burn-out by reassessing a center's existing organization can be time-consuming and initially awkward. But such a process can also have the effect of energizing staff and improving work relations by helping workers see that they are not personally responsible for their unsatisfactory working conditions. It can be a valuable beginning in addressing the larger tasks which face the field: publicizing and legitimizing child care work and allocating to it the social and financial resources it needs and deserves. ■

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[1] *Children at the Center: Final Report of the National Day Care Study*, March 1979, prepared by Abt Associates, Cambridge, Mass., for the Day Care Division, Administration for Children, Youth and Families. See also *Day Care Centers in the U.S.: A National Profile 1976-1977*, December 1978, prepared by Abt Associates for the Day Care Division, ACYF.

[2] Stanley Seiderman, "Combatting Staff Burn-Out," *Day Care and Early Education*, Summer 1978.

[3] The three views are presented, in simplified form, in *Child Care Quarterly*,

(Continued on inside back cover)

Child Care Workers

(Continued from page 6)

Summer 1977: J. Freudenberger, "Burn-Out: Occupational Hazard of the Child Care Worker"; C. Maslach and A. Pines, "The Burn-Out Syndrome in the Day Care Setting"; M. Mattingly, "Sources of Stress and Burn-Out in Professional Child Care Work"; Michael J. Reed. "Stress in Live-In Child Care"; and B Sutton, "Consideration of Career Time in Child Care Work; Observations on Child Care Work Experiences."

[4] Pat Nida, "Super-teacher, Super Burn-Out." presentation at the National Conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Atlanta, 1979.

[5] Detailed information on statistical analyses may be obtained from The Child Care Staff Education Project, P.O. Box 5603, Berkeley, Calif. 94705.

[6] U.S. Department of Labor, *Bureau of Labor Statistics: Employment Perspective: Working Women*, Report No. 574, No. 2, Second Quarter, 1979. San Francisco has one of the highest standards of living in the country, which suggests that higher wages may be less a reflection of high educational and experience levels and more a result of regional salary schedules.

[7] Regrettably, since the completion of our interviews, there has been a tremendous change in the situation of public school child care staff in San Francisco. Proposition 13 resulted in many layoffs of those classified as teachers. Some teachers have been replaced by aides who earn $3.84 an hour with no benefits. Some of the laid-off teachers have been rehired for their former jobs as aides.

[8] Additional information about unionization and child care may be obtained from Boston Area Day Care Workers United (BADWU), 77 Turner St., Brighton, Mass. 02135.

[9] Parents and Workers United for Child Care, *Who Cares for the Children?*, a slideshow available through St. Patrick's Day Care Center, 366 Clementina St., San Francisco, Calif. 94103.

[10] Proprietary centers typically spend between 50 to 60 percent of their budget on salaries. One center in our sample alloted 25 percent of its $100,000 budget to salaries; the owners' share of the profit was 36 percent of the budget.

CHILD CARE AND THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

"The feminization of poverty is now economic reality . . . At this time two out of three adults living in poverty are women. When it comes to being poor, women and children are first. Seventy-five percent of our nation's impoverished are women and children."

- educator Barry Kaufman, 1984

Consider the following:

* Women who work outside the home earn only 70 cents to a man's dollar, according to a U.S. Census Bureau report released in September, 1987.

* Although there are more than 44 million women in the paid labor force, 80% are restricted to just 20 of the 420 listed occupational categories (such as retail sales, services, clerical work and factory work).

* Fully employed women high school graduates earn less income on average than fully employed men who have not completed elementary school.

* Full time employment is no safeguard against poverty; three fifths of all women working full time earn less than $10,000 a year.

* Up to one third of women on welfare work outside the home, but can't earn enough to support their families.

* If women were paid the wages which similarly qualified men earn, half of the families now living in poverty would not be.

Women's marital status, of course, also figures heavily in the poverty equation. Without an additional income, economic security is impossible for many women -- but more and more women find themselves supporting their families on one meager salary. As the saying goes, "a woman is only a husband away from poverty." In California, 44% of families headed by women with no husband are poor, compared with 9% of all other families.

What accounts for women's poverty? Contrary to common myths, women in poverty are often women in the paid labor force. Employment -- not unemployment -- is responsible in part for their plight: most women are segregated into predominantly female, low-paying, low status, and non-union jobs.

How does child care fit into this picture? Child care is a key to women's economic equity. Without affordable, quality child care services, women are often prevented from taking paid jobs, moving up to full time work schedules or participating in training programs. Without stable child care arrangements, women are vulnerable to children's illnesses and the other unpredictable calamities of family life. And of course, the cost of child care is a tremendous drain on most women's meager salaries.

Not surprisingly, then, every conference and task force facing the issues of women and poverty is confronted with the need to develop a plan for affordable child care. Ironically, however, these discussions frequently overlook the fact that child care itself is a field which employs women at poverty level wages.

Almost 2 million women care for children in their own homes. Several hundred thousand people, more than 90% female, care for children in center-based programs. Most of these workers are women of child bearing age with families to support. And in keeping with the overall pattern of poor women, many child care workers are well-educated, yet find they are barely able to support themselves, much less other family members.

Women's advocates and policy makers, therefore, face a knotty problem: how to provide enough affordable child care services for the many families who need them, without doing so at the expense of the caregivers.

Yet there is some cause for hope in the current discussion of the feminization of poverty. It allows child care workers a new opportunity to share their plight with other women's advocates, and thereby build support for their needs. Contact CCEP for more information about other women's economic equity projects, and let us know what is going on in your area.

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TURN, TURN, TURN

Teacher Turnover and Its Effect on Staff, Children and Families

No other phenomenon in child care centers creates as much stress for providers, parents and children as the turnover of staff from year to year.

Children are often disoriented by changing caregivers, and upset by the loss of significant relationships. Parents are uneasy because of their children's feelings of loss, and anxious about constantly establishing new relationships with caregivers. Staff are demoralized by the loss of co-workers, which often results in needing to work harder and longer to orient new people and to successfully maintain the center's routines.

A 1985 study by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) found that "child care workers have among the highest rates of job turnover of all occupations. Between 1980 and 1990, 42% of all child care workers in educational and service positions and 59% of all child care workers in private household settings will need to be replaced each year, just to maintain the current supply of child care providers.

"These rates," the NAEYC report continues, "are more than double the average replacement rate of 19.4% for all occupations. Low pay, lack of benefits, and stressful working conditions are the major reasons child care providers leave their jobs in such high numbers."

Other studies from around the country have confirmed these findings. A New York state survey released in September 1986 by the Center for Public Advocacy Research found annual turnover rates of 40% for teachers, 39% for assistants and 37% for aides. A 1984 study in the Ann Arbor, Michigan area found that 56% of child care workers had been in their present jobs for three years or less. In Madison, Wisconsin in 1986, over a third of the area's child care workers had been in their jobs less than two years.

In southern Alameda County, in the fall of 1986, the Child Care Employee Project found an astonishing 57% turnover rate for teachers and 43% for assistants. A survey by CCEP and the Children's Council of San Francisco in the spring of 1987 found that turnover in the city is clearly linked to salaries and benefits. The much better-paying San Francisco Unified School District centers had a turnover rate of 12% for teachers and 5% for assistants, as opposed to a city-wide average of 27% for teachers and 37% for assistants.

How does staff turnover affect children? While more research is still needed, the preliminary findings are troubling. In studies of children between 18 months and three years of age, Carollee Howes, professor of child development at UCLA, found in 1986 that those whose child care providers have changed several times demonstrate less self-control and less confidence than peers in stable environments. Another researcher (Cummings, 1980) found that caregiver stability is related to children's adjustment to child care. In a similar vein, Berk (1985) found that career-committed caregivers interacted with young children in more age-appropriate and stimulating ways than did caregivers who approached their work as a temporary job.

"An unstable staff affects the quality of care," writes Caroline Zinsser in the 1986 New York state survey report. "Children suffer when the bonds of trust in a caregiver are broken and a new person comes to take her place. Classroom routines are disrupted. When vacancies cannot be filled immediately, which is increasingly the case, other staff must cover the gaps by taking on extra responsibilities, resulting in fewer qualified adults caring for more children. When children are distressed, so are their parents, so much so that their own work may be affected."

One New York director told Zinsser, "A little over a year ago, I had a teacher position open. In approximately two months I went through four different teachers, who all found higher-paying jobs within a couple of weeks after starting with us. It is almost impossible to recruit and keep highly qualified personnel at the low wages we are equipped to offer." Another director lamented, "We have lost 11 teachers this past year . . . I'm beginning to wonder why I'm here myself."

What is the solution to the crisis of high teacher turnover in child care? Ann Schneider, director of a day care system in Houston, gave this advice to the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families at a public hearing in 1984:

"The necessary ingredients in high quality child care are equipment, materials and staff. Of these ingredients, staff are the most important . . . Children need consistency from the adults in their lives, and constant staff turnover creates confusion and concern . . .

"Staff turnover can be reduced by providing staff with an adequate salary plan, a fair fringe benefits package which includes health insurance and retirement, and an opportunity for job satisfaction through training, and the availability of adequate equipment and materials."

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CHILD CARE SCARE:
the Fallout from Reports of Abuse

In the past few years, a dark cloud has descended upon the child care community. Reports of child sexual assault and abuse in child care programs have generated tremendous concern about the safety of children separated from their parents during working hours. As users and providers of child care, we at the Child Care Employee Project are horrified by these stories, and we share the worries of so many other parents and community members. But we are also concerned about the wounds which the reports themselves inflict.

For those of us who work in child care, these recent tragedies are steeped in ironies. The irony that the most sensationalistic stories have focused on day care centers, when the vast majority of abuse actually occurs in children's homes. The irony that we have thirsted for some public discussion of what child care workers do, but that the media finds us of interest only when children are victimized. The irony that what makes our jobs most worthwhile -- intimacy with children -- is now an issue tinged with awkwardness, fear and misunderstanding.

We applaud the fact that child abuse and child sexual assault are being identified, publicized and prosecuted, but we lament the current focus of the discussion. Anyone reading the papers or hearing the news might well think that such maltreatment happens only in child care, and frequently. Indeed, the terms "child care" and "child abuse" now are often mentioned in one breath. People who had never given a thought to child care now can't stop talking about it.

We need to emphasize strongly and repeatedly that child care, which has received so much attention for perpetrating child abuse, is one of the major resources for preventing it. Good child care reduces family strain by providing a safe, nurturing place for children while parents work, as well as opportunities for parents to discuss and understand the difficult and perplexing behaviors of young children. Child care can also provide respite to parents in crisis. This is not to say that abuse cannot occur in a child care program; we know that it can. But child care should not become the scapegoat. In fact, abusive child care situations can thrive only when parents have little choice of where to send their children. We therefore need more affordable, high-quality child care in order to stem abuse.

How has all this focus on child care affected us?

Parents -- mothers in particular, since they are most often responsible for child care arrangements -- feel even more guilty than usual about leaving their children. Publicized crimes are heard as a call to return to the home and take care of the children themselves. Many, of course, cannot. So they leave their children each day with a heavy heart, and wonder and worry about who is taking care of them.

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Caregivers feel nervous and vulnerable. They empathize with parents' fears -- many are parents themselves -- but don't know how to respond. Many feel defensive, sensing that their every move is being scrutinized. They find themselves tripping over words, monitoring their affectionate responses to children and even making arrangements never to be alone with them. Many providers are afraid to disagree with parents about anything for fear of reprisals, including false accusations of abuse. They fear that all child care workers are seen as potential abusers. Men in child care are particularly suspect for choosing a nurturing profession, so-called "women's work." Amidst the tension and fear, other major problems in centers -- low salaries and high turnover, lack of breaks and substitutes -- are being ignored.

How can this climate be changed? How can we create a healthy concern for the safety of children which does not make both parents and workers fearful and defensive? There are no magical answers, but for child care providers and parents alike, talking about these issues is essential, in order to identify and check paranoia, and to move toward action.

Here are some ideas:

- Encourage parents who are considering enrolling their child in your program to visit more than once. Give them names of other parents who are willing to share impressions.

- Let all parents know that they are welcome to visit the program regularly, and create vehicles for their participation. Parental scrutiny and involvement is essential to ensure quality care for children.

- Hold parent meetings to discuss the issues raised by the media. Identify the tensions created by the situation and let parents know your concerns. Discuss the difference between nurturing and inappropriate touching. Give parents information about how to identify child abuse, and how to interpret children's often confusing stories. Talk about the importance of keen observation and questioning. Create many opportunities for parent input so that small problems do not grow out of proportion, leading to false accusations by either parents or providers.

- Talk with colleagues and co-workers about your fears. Discuss the confusing issues about relating to children and their bodies. For example, how do you help children develop a positive body image? Ask your local college or resource and referral agency to hold workshops on such topics.

- Work with other advocates on preventive, not just punitive solutions to child abuse. Help parents in your program support each other by establishing babysitting co-ops or exchanges, so that they get some time away from their children in addition to their working hours.

Perhaps several parents can pay a staff member for some evening or weekend care.

- Join with others working to increase child care options for parents, support services and training for caregivers.

- Contact your local media as often as possible about doing positive stories on child care workers, including what you are doing to deal with child abuse. Extend these public education efforts to your local police and social service agencies.

The final irony may be a silver lining to this cloud. Child abuse stories raise the issue of child care quality. For so many years, we have been preoccupied with asking for more services, and with protecting programs from closing down. Perhaps these recent incidents will encourage parents and caregivers together to step forward and demand not only more services, but more support for the under-recognized services we already have.

* Adapted from an article first published in Child Care Employee News, Summer 1984, Vol. 3, No. 2.

Day Care: Men Need Not Apply

When I started graduate school in history in 1971 and was looking for a part-time job, I was welcomed into the campus child-care center with open arms. Those were the good old days of consciousness-raising and sensitivity training, when men were being urged to get away from the harsh male stereotypes and show a little affection, a little tenderness. The day-care environment, then virtually devoid of male workers, was the ideal place to exercise one's new-found capabilities. Now, with newspaper stories and television dramas raising quite a different sort of consciousness about abuse in child-care settings, the once open arms are nervously folded and the welcoming smile is cautiously stiffened. Men are getting the message—never fully denied in the '70s but at least more actively challenged—that child care is women's work.

I chose to work in day care for a variety of reasons. For one, I needed a real-life counterbalance to the arid intellectualism and the debasing competitiveness of academia, and the people I encountered in child care were almost universally warm, generous, and humane. And in the broad political sense, I was supplying a much-needed social service—right down to preparing snacks, wiping noses, and changing diapers. This was consistent with my budding notions of social and cultural responsibility, including the idea that men could be nurturing and physically affectionate toward children. My direct interactions with children, parents, and coworkers in fact proved more immediately rewarding than the brainy debates in graduate seminars and the abstract strategizing in weekly socialist political meetings.

Even as I continued my graduate work, advancing to Ph.D. candidacy and beginning work on a dissertation, I pursued studies in early childhood education and committed myself to the growing professionalization of the field. Fourteen years after I began caring for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, I find it hard to imagine more fulfilling work. But if I were 21 today, I'd think more than twice about child care as a full-time occupation.

Given the low status of the work and the near-impossibility of making a decent living, why would any man choose child care as a career? That has always been a question, and for many people outside the field the answer has often been "Well, he must be a little weird," which usually carried the implication of homosexuality. Now—in the light of proliferating revelations of sexual abuse in day-care homes and centers and in the shadow of hysteria fueled by the media—the implication is much more sinister. It is—although few would state it so baldly—that any man who would want to work with young children is a potential pedophile.

Child abuse is a tragedy and a crime of immeasurable proportions, but the overemphasis on its occurrence in day care has cast a pall over the entire profession. Even the most fundamental day-to-day relationships between parent, child, and teacher are tainted with mistrust, and the specter looms larger over men. Vulnerability, which for a time was a romanticized notion suggesting a lack of defenses, now takes on its more literal meaning, that of being "open to attack or damage."

The wave of fear is not only dividing day-care workers from parents, it is also destroying the vital bond between day-care workers—female as well as male—and children.

In the program where I work—a network of seven centers providing the full range of services from infant-toddler to after-school care—at least one or two men were at each site in the late 1970s. Now, out of a career teaching staff of 28, three are male. It used to be that when male day-care workers burned out or could no longer accept the day-care minimal standard of living, they could consider moving upstairs into administrative positions. But there too the picture has changed. I know of one California program in which a hiring committee composed of parents and staff felt compelled to discuss—in the abstract—the propriety of hiring a man as director. The primary issue was what the community at large would think of a man who would want that sort of job and of a program that would hire him.

But men are hardly the only victims of the icy climate. Children are being deprived of spontaneous nurturing and, having lost a diversity of role models, are learning once again that certain jobs "naturally" belong to women and others to men. Parents are becoming fearful, and mothers, especially, are being made to feel guilty about abandoning their children to "strangers."

As men exit the child-care profession and the workplace becomes "refeminized," conservatives will find it easier to rationalize the substandard pay scales and demeaning working conditions of "glorified baby-sitting." The gains child care has made in the past decade, in terms of both status and availability, will evaporate. If the bills pending in the California legislature are typical, the public policy response to child abuse is targeted at policing strategies rather than providing for more and better child care. Officials are devising more and better ways to screen providers through fingerprinting and criminal checks. Every day-care employee is automatically suspect.

And although the internal resources for mutual support within the day-care community are far from exhausted, fear is rising and morale is falling. There is a certain irony in the overall picture of males being persecuted and displaced in an occupation primarily built and defended by women, but the irony withers in the face of the challenge that all child-care workers—and the community as a whole—must confront.

–DERK RICHARDSON

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What Can Employer Supported Programs Do for Child Care Staff?

by Marcy Whitebook

Many early childhood practitioners herald employer supported child care as the remedy for the low pay, lack of benefits, and limited career mobility that plague the field. Clearly, people working with young children require a fast-acting cure for their ills: they are among the lowest paid workers in the country.

Despite considerable education and training, many earn close to the minimum wage (Abt, 1979). Few receive medical or dental coverage and most work without benefit of written contracts or grievance procedures. Although guaranteed by law, many do not receive paid breaks or compensation for overtime work (Whitebook et al., 1982). These conditions fuel high turnover, estimated at 15-30% a year in child care centers compared to 10% a year in other human service jobs (Seiderman, 1979).

Speculation about the benefits of employer supported services can be heard in many gatherings of child care staff. Its virtues are especially extolled by those contemplating a consulting career in private industry. Comments are heard such as: "Directors will receive the same as any department head in the hospital," or "Teachers will have to be paid comparably to others in the corporation with equivalent training." Then, more pessimistic voices emerge, often from those who have had some contact with employers: "Employers are only going to pay the going rate in the field," and "They say they want the best qualified staff until they calculate costs. Then they sing a different song." The discussion becomes more muddied when one person tells of her friend earning $8 an hour teaching in a hospital center and another tells of a colleague earning only $4.50 teaching at a worksite program.

Marcy Whitebook is coordinator of the Child Care Employee Project in Berkeley, CA.

How do child care staff actually fare in employer supported programs? Until recently this question was almost impossible to answer because there were few facts available about the number of such programs, let alone data about staff compensation. Now, thanks to the efforts of the National Employer Supported Child Care Project, funded by the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, preliminary information is available.

After an exhaustive search, the National Project identified all of the employer and union efforts in child care across the nation, and asked each organization to complete an indepth questionnaire about its child care program and its effect on the company (Burud et al., 1983). Findings regarding salaries and benefits for child care staff are discussed here. (The data for this article was supplied by the National Employer Supported Child Care Project. Analysis and interpretation of the data has been completed by this author.)

Wages and Benefits

In 1982, businesses, industries, hospitals, government agencies, and unions were surveyed by the National Employer Supported Child Care Project. Four hundred and fifteen agencies participated in the survey. Of these, 211 operated child care centers, and another 103 supported child care programs in their community. The remainder were involved in information and referral services, child care reimbursements, family day care programs, and parent education efforts. This discussion of salaries will focus on centers operated by employers and unions.

Figure 1 reveals the compensation level of staff in employer supported programs. Over 50% of teachers earned more than $5 an hour; almost one third earned between $6–8 an hour. Over 20% of aides reported earnings over $5 an hour and over 60% of responding directors reported wages over $8 an hour. Because no current, comprehensive national data on salaries in all types of early childhood programs exists, it is difficult to evaluate employer supported wages in relation to the rest of the field. However, recent data from California, known for its relatively high level of staff compensation, found average hourly wages for teachers near $5, for aides near $4, and for directors near $8.

FIGURE I

HOURLY WAGES/EMPLOYER SUPPORTED CHILD CARE 1982

	Teachers n=190	Aides n=152	Directors n=93
under $4	10.5%	45.5%	1%
$4-4.99	30%	32%	6.5%
$5-5.99	24%	15%	6.5%
$6-7.99	32%	6%	27%-
$8-8.99	3%	—	30%
$10.00+*	—	—	29%

*Only 6.5% of directors mades over $12 an hour.

In addition to questions about hourly wages, employer supported programs participating in the survey were also asked to rate the salaries in their program in comparison with the salaries of other child care programs in their community. One hundred and twenty one programs responded to this question: 57% of these rated their salaries as higher and 35.5% rated them as equal to other programs in their community. Only 7.5% rated their salaries as less than the going rate in their area.

Wages alone are a poor indicator of total compensation because generous benefits can significantly improve earnings. In this respect, staff in employer supported programs fare better than their colleagues in other centers, most of whom receive little more than a few days paid vacation and sick leave. (Child Care Employee Project, 1983). Two hundred and nine companies responded to the question, "How would you describe the benefits package that your child care staff receive?" Sixty-two percent rated child care staff benefits as equal to other employees in the rest of the company. Only 14% rated benefits as less than those of other employees, and 4.7% stated that child care center employees received no benefits. Although detailed descriptions of the benefit packages each company offers are unavailable, companies providing child care as a benefit for employees often provide a substantial array of other benefits as well.

Besides benefits, the majority of staff in employer supported programs receive regular salary increases, further distinguishing them from staff in other types of child care. Of the 115 programs responding to questions about raises, approximately 85% reported that their staff receive annual cost of living increases and merit raises.

While many staff in employer supported child care centers rank among the better compensated employees in the field, it is important to remember that a substantial number do not. For example, 40% of teachers in the survey earned less than $5 an hour. Turnover, which has been linked to dissatisfaction with salaries (Whitebook et al., 1982), ranks at 22% in these employer supported programs. This rate is average for the field. (Child Care Employee Project, 1983).

Thus, the confusion among early childhood people about the advantages of employer supported child care reflect this ambiguous state of affairs: staff in employer supported centers have greater opportunity to receive, but are not necessarily guaranteed, a better than average child care wage. Depending on the type of industry operating the program, chances for better compensation vary: two thirds of health industry programs paid over $5 an hour to teachers, compared to 53%

of the manufacturing companies, 40% of the nonprofit agencies and 35.5% of the non-manufacturing companies. Of course, even good salaries in early childhood education are far from adequate to maintain a modest, but comfortable, standard of living. (See Figure 2). Especially when education and training are considered, child care staff, like workers in other female-dominated fields, receive far less than many workers with comparable skills.

Compensation Levels and Advantages to Companies

Many compelling arguments for adequate compensation for child care staff exist: well-paid staff experience greater satisfaction, have lower rates of turnover and have greater opportunity to create stable and creative environments for children. In the National Employer Supported Child Care survey, variables affecting reduced turnover and absenteeism, greater productivity, higher morale and more successful recruitment among employees receiving child care as a benefit were examined. Greater productivity and reduced turnover and absenteeism among employees receiving child care as a benefit were correlated with higher wages and benefits for child care staff. Additionally, higher morale and more successful recruitment among employees were also correlated with better benefit packages for child care staff.

Insuring Adequate Compensation

The survey results described in this article suggest some cause for optimism about staff opportunities in employer supported child care programs. However, it is possible that the poor conditions that plague the field will be merely replicated in this expanding form of service. Child care is expensive, and staff costs constitute the major part of most budgets. Even employers, who have greater access to funds than many others, look to cut costs.

To insure adequate compensation, early childhood practitioners must actively work to increase the awareness about the importance of decent working conditions for child care staff. Whether as a consultant meeting directly with industry representatives, a director of an established program, or a teacher or aide talking informally to parents interested in approaching their employer or union, people must be prepared to discuss the economic needs of child care staff. Following are some guidelines for addressing these questions. They are geared toward talking to employers but they can be adapted for discussions with parents and others in the community.

- Explain the inadequacy of current child care wages. Income for many staff is at poverty levels. The going wage rate reflects years of underpayment in this traditional women's field.

- Raise the issue of turnover and its documented relationship to low pay and lack of benefits. Employers are sensitive to the high cost of turnover and its toll on employee morale. They want to avoid it! Share research finding that link better salaries for child care staff with reduced absenteeism and turnover and greater productivity in companies with child care programs.

- Suggest a child care pay scale commensurate with other company employees with similar training and education. Stress that child care staff be paid comparably to others in the company doing work which requires equal training and skill.

- Urge that child care staff be paid at a higher-than-average level for child care workers in the community. Indicate that this is the trend in existing employer supported child care.

- Encourage employers to offer child care staff, whatever their pay rate, the same benefit packages available to other employees in the company. A good benefit package often makes it possible for child care staff to remain in the field. Point out that better benefit packages for child care staff are also associated with increased productivity, reduced absenteesim and turnover, and higher morale in companies offering child care services.

- Emphasize the importance of hiring trained staff to achieve quality program for children. Point out the key role adequate compensation can play in securing and maintaining trained staff.

FIGURE 2

YEARLY EQUIVALENT OF HOURLY SALARIES*

*The yearly equivalent equals the hourly wage x 40 hours/week x 52 weeks/year. There are other ways to compute yearly earnings. This is just to give a rough idea of how wages translate. Remember that few child care workers are paid for a forty hour week 52 weeks a year....although many of them work that much.

HOURLY/YEARLY	HOURLY/YEARLY
$3.50=$7280	$7.00=$14,560
$4.00=$8320	$8.00=$16,640
$5.00=$10,400	$9.00=$18,720
$6.00=$12,480	$10.00=$20,800

Raises

- Urge that child care staff be given yearly salary increases to offset inflation and to help overcome years of underpayment. Such a policy will help to attract and maintain highly qualified personnel.

Working Conditions

- Advise employers to pay attention to working conditions as well as compensation. Emphasize the importance of providing such things as written contracts, personnel policies, job descriptions, grievance procedures, a staff lounge for breaks, adequate staffing levels, paid preparation time, regular inservice, and paid substitutes for all staff. These policies are critical to the well-being of staff and consequently affect the children in their care.

Resources

- Urge employers to educate themselves about resources available to them, such as tax credits, the child care food program, in-kind donations and community programs. These resources will help with costs, creating more flexibility in budgets for providing decent wages and maintaining affordable fees for parents. (See resources listed at end of article.)
- Remind employers that in-kind donations of space and maintenance services (such as food or laundry in hospital centers) will cost them relatively little and will allow more funds for other essential budget items.

Employer supported child care provides the early childhood community with an opportunity to challenge existing practices which fuel dissatisfaction, turnover, and the exit of many trained staff from the field. In order to meet this challenge, practitioners must be prepared to speak up for their needs for adequate compensation and decent working conditions. In so doing, they are not only addressing their own concerns, they are creating the conditions for better quality services to children and families.

Resources

For more information about employer supported child care, see *Employer Supported Child Care: Investing in Human Resources* by Sandra Burud, Pamela Ashbacher, and Jacquelyn McCrosky. This resource is a comprehensive, how-to manual on all forms of employer supported child care services. It contains information on salaries, tax benefits, creative funding options, assessing the need for child care and how to implement programs. Available from Auburn House, 131 Clarendon St., Boston, MA 02116 or the National Employer Supported Child Care Project, 330 S. Oak Knoll, Pasadena, CA 91101. $15 plus $2 for postage and handling.

For information about union efforts to obtain work related child care, see *Bargaining for Equality* by the Women's Labor Project. Available from Union Wage, c/o Maupin, 330 Ellis, San Francisco, CA $7.50 plus $1.50 for postage and handling.

For more information about working conditions and salaries, contact the Child Care Employee Project, PO Box 5603, Berkeley, CA 94705.

The Child Care Employee Project (CCEP) postcard series is available for $5.50 per pack, including postage and handling. To order the postcards, write to the above address.

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Little Kids, Big Bucks

Inside America's Largest Child-Care Empire

Peace Through Positive Thinking

Barbara Ehrenreich On The Unfastened President

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Perry Mendel has led a charmed life since he got into the franchised child-care business 19 years ago. But many teachers at Mendel's nearly 1,200 Kinder-Care Learning Centers are less than enchanted.

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The board of directors of Beyond War includes, among others, an ex-CIA agent who made a fortune selling computer software to the military. The organization raises $3 million annually, and its meetings begin and end on time. What kind of peace group is this, anyway?

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Chemical weapons have killed scores of Iranian soldiers in the Persian Gulf war. But the deadly reach of nerve gas goes far beyond the battlefield: the gas is a potential nightmare for the 15 nations that have it. The U.S. stockpile is leaking from [illegible] different sites around the country.

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DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES
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Seven key witnesses won't be around to tell Congress what they knew about the administration's dirty little war against Nicaragua. But if these dead men could talk, here's some of what they might say.

Cover photograph outside a Kinder-Care Learning Center in Pittsburg, California, by George Steinmetz.

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The McChild-Care

CHANCES ARE, THERE'S A Kinder-Care Learning Center near you. It's easy to find: right off the main drag, or right off the freeway ramp, near the new office park. There's the little red steeple, with the black plastic bell that doesn't ring; there's the Kinder-Care van, ready to take the older kids to school and pick them up in the afternoon.

Perhaps you're used to child care in windowless church basements with mildewed rugs, or with home providers who go out of business after six months? But no, a Kinder-Care center is roomy and bright. It's convenient. It's *nice*. The walls are decorated with murals of storybook characters, and of Kinderoo, the company's kangaroo mascot and "lovable goodwill ambassador." The toys and blocks are solid and colorful, straight out of the home-office catalog. The classrooms are divided into small "discovery areas" marked "science," "home living," "construction," "creative art." The bathroom fixtures are child-size. The kitchen is immaculate. Outside there's a landscaped yard with a sturdy climbing structure, and perhaps a fenced-in wading pool. It's open year-round, from 6:30 in the morning to 6:00 in the evening. Where do you sign up?

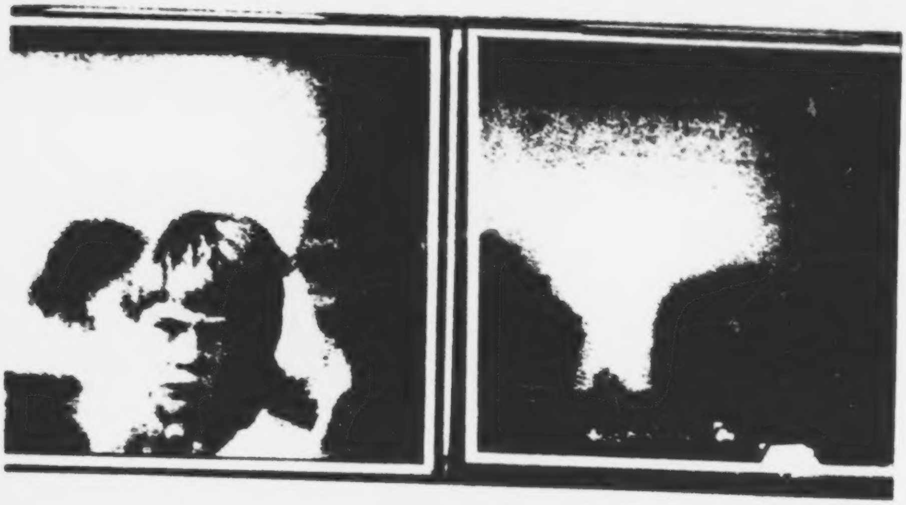
The stack of material the director hands you promotes "the closest thing to a mother's love," as well as a step-by-step curriculum, run by well-trained teachers, that leads to better test scores in school. Sure, there's a certain die-cut

Follow Me To
Kinder Care

The Kinder-Care chain turns little kids into big bucks

Empire

By Dan Bellm



John Cha

look to it all, even to the children's artwork—identical cut-and-pasted pumpkins or a wall full of the letter C made from cotton balls. But that, Kinder-Care executives say, is an attraction for parents who move to another city: "No matter where you go," says company vice president Ann Muscari, "you'll find a nice, clean Kinder-Care center very much like the one you left behind."

That's how Perry Mendel planned it. In 1968, the shopping-mall developer in Montgomery, Alabama, noticed what thousands of parents, two generations of nursery school teachers, and a loose, impoverished coalition of child-care activists already knew: waves of mothers had entered the work force and were often anxious about who would care for their children. Some may have seen the need for a national policy to ease the burden on working women and their children. Perry Mendel saw a fortune.

Mendel, who would not consent to an interview with *Mother Jones*, has told and retold the story. One morning he asked why a certain man around town had such time on his hands, such a pretty car; it was because, he learned, the man's wife owned two "nursery schools." Then Mendel read an article about "the alluring economics of a nationwide day-care chain." So he put together $200,000 and hired the man of leisure and his wife to be center operators. He found consultants—including football player Bart Starr, who advised him on "muscle coordination and development." He paid an ad agency $100 to develop the company logo, the little red steeple that he boasts has become "as recognizable as the Golden Arches."

Nineteen years later, Mendel and his original nine partners are millionaires, and Kinder-Care Learning Centers

Teacher Johnnie Bradford and son

Fou del and K

Some Canadian Kinder-Care workers are unionized, but the current organizing drive is the first in the United States to take on the child-care chains.

leads the child-care-for-profit industry. Kinder-Care operates nearly 1,200 centers in 40 states and Canada, with a capacity for over 115,000 children—far ahead of its closest competitor, the 520-site La Petite Academy of Kansas City. Projecting 10- to 15-percent annual growth, Kinder-Care invested some $75 million last year to start 125 to 150 new centers, and Mendel predicts center number 2,000 by 1993.

The company has zeroed in on growing suburbs, especially in the Sun Belt. The demographic unit of choice is a young, two-worker family earning $25,000 to $35,000 a year, and willing and able to pay $60 or more per week for dependable, full-time care. "We're a middle-class child-care organization," Ann Muscari says. "We are not dealing with children who have been severely deprived. We can't put in the time with children who have to be taught personal hygiene or how to eat. We build on what parents are doing at home."

Ironically, for many families access to good child care is *the* dividing line between life on welfare and the middle class. According to the Children's Defense Fund in Washington, D.C., 23 states now help fewer families with their child-care needs than they did in 1981. Funding cuts, soaring liability insurance rates, and a shortage of preschool-qualified teachers are now straining, or closing down, nonprofit and "Mom and Pop"-owned centers nationwide. But the demand remains high: in 1985, for instance, researchers found that California had 50,000 child-care spaces for the 209,000 children under age two who needed them.

Kinder-Care has succeeded by courting the middle-class market with attractive, convenient, and reliable service. The company's executives are management experts who know how to cut costs and corners—often in violation of poorly enforced state regulations. Mendel has parlayed real-estate savvy into profits and has bought and created spin-off businesses to capitalize on what he calls his "captive market" of parents and children. (See "From Real Estate to Kiddie Insurance," page 36.) But above all, Kinder-Care's success depends on thousands of underpaid, unorganized, female child-care workers. To keep them from organizing, Kinder-Care lately has broken the law

COMPANY EXECUTIVES used to gloat about the "semi-inexhaustible supply of people who like to work with children." In 1978, Perry Mendel estimated that 40 percent of his employees were ex-schoolteachers, many of whom had been laid off. Many others, he said two years later, were "young female(s)" in their "first job situation. Many take jobs in day-care solely as a stopgap until they are able to get into some other field." Real estate vice president Jack Hanchrow added, "I'm satisfied it's like the Marine Corps—there's a certain number of people who'd pay money to do it."

Not anymore. School enrollments are up, teachers are back at work, and child-care programs throughout the country are facing a severe shortage of staff. Many child-care workers are no longer "young females"; according to a national survey, close to 50 percent of them are 35 or older, and at least 30 percent earn their family's sole income.

The recruitment ads now set a more respectful tone. In some areas, Kinder-Care is offering employees a $75 bonus for finding new help. "Be a child-care professional at Kinder-Care," says one leaflet, "a company where employees are rewarded for ambition and excellence." Another says, "The Kinder-Care teacher is a very special person," one who "sometimes sheds a tear because she is touched by the beauty of a child experiencing life in his very own, special way." "We . . . shall always try to remember," Mendel promises in the employee benefits brochure, "to reward those of you who make [our] growth possible."

But they haven't remembered. Last year Kinder-Care showed earnings of $33.3 million, and Perry Mendel made over $1 million. President Richard J. Grassgreen was paid more than $800,000. Even the four Kinderoos the company hires to dress up for ribbon-cutting ceremonies make as much as $20,000 a year. Yet roughly three-quarters of Kinder-Care's child-care providers start out at minimum wage.

Marie Ryan (not her real name) is one of the "very special persons" Kinder-Care still gets sometimes. Hired last summer as a teacher's aide at a Kinder-Care center on the East Coast for $4 an hour, she was soon promoted to teacher status for the same pay. At her three-month evaluation she was raised a dime, to $4.10; at six months she got another 15 cents. In return, for two or three days a week she cares for 11 or 12 four-year-olds on her own, even though the legal maximum in her state is 10.

"The director knows I'm frustrated," says Ryan. "She tells me, 'Let them just play.' She says the company is 'just not hiring,' and has made a decision not to get more help. The director is basically a nice person; she's under a lot of pressure from the district manager. But I can only run a learning program when I have help." Nice or not, a Kinder-Care director, trained and pressured to keep costs down, may feel an incentive to understaff.

Overall, the educational program seems sound enough, if not particularly creative. Kinder-Care's "15 Goals" for children (to "develop a healthy, positive self-image, [to] develop moral and aesthetic values . . .") could have been written by the child-development pioneer Jean Piaget. But the curriculum from the Montgomery home office, packed into thick, imposing three-ring binders, does seem neatly geared to untrained, short-term help. "It's all spelled out here day by day," says the four-year-olds' teacher at a Massachusetts center, holding a binder marked "Once Upon a Time . . . Happily Ever After." "All you have to do is open up the book and give it to them." Today they aren't getting much. She has to prepare lunch because the cook has quit, and her aide is minding the children on her own—a violation of state regulations. At another center nearby, an employee admits she was unofficially promoted from aide to teacher after three months, without the required training: "The director said, 'Just follow the instructions in the book.'"

IN JULY 1985, JOHNNIE BRADford was hired to teach at a brand-new Kinder-Care center in Pittsburg, California, an industrial town northeast of San Francisco. After two months she was promoted to assistant director but still made less than $5 an hour.

Some of Kinder-Care's personnel policies troubled her from the start. Teachers, for instance, can be laid off or have their hours cut on a day-to-day basis. "Any morning," says Bradford, "you could be sent home if they didn't have enough children. Then the age groups would be mixed together and moved around. The consistency the children would get is questionable." "Full-time" employment is 20 hours or more per week—not much of a job when the pay is near minimum wage, and with hours variable enough to make a second job hard to schedule.

Sick leave was another sore point. Colds, flu, and all kinds of 24-hour bugs are inevitable when working around small children, but Kinder-Care employees in their first year receive no sick pay until their third day out. "Obviously, because of that policy," says another ex-teacher, "people come to work sick—or they take a third day even if they feel better, just to get paid." But expressing discontent to parents was against the rules. The employee handbook threatens to fire any teacher who discusses with parents "local government regulations, the conditions of center facilities, and the terms and conditions of employment."

In December, Johnnie Bradford—now back in school at her local community college and working for Kinder-Care as a substitute teacher instead of as the assistant director—learned that some local child-care workers had joined a union. Over the next month and a half, Bradford and others from Kinder-Care centers in nearby Antioch and Concord had four meetings with Mary Ann Massenburg, the general organizer for District 65 of the United Auto Workers. [Editor's Note: District 65 represents employees at *Mother Jones*, and Massenburg is the union representative of the bargaining unit at the magazine.] People began signing union cards, and a drive for Kinder-Care's 14 Northern California centers was under way. Several Toronto Kinder-Care centers were organized by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union in 1982, but the Northern California drive is the first in the United States to take on the child-care chains—not just Kinder-Care, but also La Petite Academy.

On January 30 of last year, after learning that center director Kathy Jacobsen intended to fire her, Bradford called the union for help. The next day, in Massenburg's presence, Jacobsen explicitly fired Bradford for engaging in union activity, claiming Bradford had done so while working a management job.

Then the company honchos started arriving: district manager Michael Hill; personnel manager Cora Anderson; and Candace Pardue, Kinder-Care's director of human resources, a woman well trained in "union prevention." Anderson, for one, was worried that Jacobsen hadn't been "circumspect" enough by firing Johnnie Bradford in front of her union organizer.

Pardue gathered the teachers together, read a prepared speech entitled "Don't Sign Anything," and passed out a "Statement of Position on Unionization." ("In everyone's best interest . . . the Company will oppose by every legal and proper means any attempt by any union to disturb the relationship which the Company and its employees currently enjoy. We hope that all of our employees feel the same way.") Hill held a discussion to elicit gripes and said he would "look into" remedying them.

From Real Estate To Kiddie Insurance

PERRY MENDEL MAY NOT HAVE known about child care when he started Kinder-Care, but he did know real estate. Abandoning a franchise-selling scheme after seven months, he made his first real headway by getting investors to buy land, pay for construction, and then offer Kinder-Care 30-year leases to maintain the property. By the time land prices shot up in the 1980s, Kinder-Care's early bargains guaranteed it a lower break-even point than newer chains could hope for. Nowadays the company buys and develops its own property.

Once Kinder-Care got rolling, it staked out other sources of profit. Chief among them has been Kinder Life Insurance Company, a wholly-owned subsidiary founded by Mendel in 1978 to sell life insurance for children. In a press release announcing the new offer, Mendel said, "This captive market of over 20,000 children is projected to grow at a rate of 7,500 new students each year, increasing our market annually, which should add substantially to the revenues of Kinder Life and Kinder-Care."

This was too much even for Wall Street. Editor Ralph Coleman of the *OTC Review*, a financial newspaper covering over-the-counter companies, responded, "We yield to no one in our devotion to capitalism, and the need for applying the profit motive to as many activities as possible. But Kinder-Care management, in its zeal for profits, is a case of capitalism run amuck—converting children into profit-centers for the benefit of the corporate coffers."

Kinder Life offers a $5,000 policy with a fixed premium of $21 a year, regardless of the child's age. *Consumer Reports* has estimated that putting the money into a passbook savings account would likely yield $11,500 by the time a five-year-old reaches 65, instead of about $2,835 through Kinder Life. Yet by 1985, Kinder Life had roughly $302 million of life insurance in force, covering 60,400 children and showing $915,000 in earnings—a record 12-percent increase from the year before. As a hook, Kinder-Care throws the first year's premium in with a family's regular child-care fee; when the year is up, about 30 percent of its customers renew.

Now Kinder-Care has begun a full-blown expansion into "financial services." Last April it bought Pioneer Western Corporation, a Kansas City insurance company that plans to visit Kinder-Care–enrolled parents to promote insurance and mutual funds; in November, Pioneer Western absorbed Kinder Life into its operations. Last May Kinder-Care bought Centerbanc Savings Association of St. Petersburg, Florida, in order to push IRA accounts, certificates of deposit, college savings plans, and mortgages to its customers.

Diversification doesn't stop there. In 1985, Kinder-Care acquired the Sylvan Learning Corporation, a chain of franchise "teaching stores" that tutor children in reading and math after school, at an average rate of $25 an hour. A mail-order business of clothing, books, and tote bags is under way, and Kinder-Care has licensed the company name with book, entertainment, and toy companies. The company name and its symbols are readily recognizable to children in the centers: starting at age three, for an additional charge, children receive a monthly workbook, including among other things a picture of Dolly Doberman, Kinder-Care's safety awareness symbol. (The Doberman pinscher with a bonnet and granny glasses says, "I never let my puppies go with strangers!") By age five, logo recognition training is well under way; *My Kinder-Care Kindergarten Book* is full of little steeples to color red. And Perry Mendel is already looking to the other extreme of the age spectrum: he's now talking about opening a chain of "day-care centers for senior citizens" over the next few years.

The verdict among investors has varied. The editors of *Forbes* and analysts at E. F. Hutton and Alex Brown and Sons fear that the company's boom is turning into a sprawl. But *Money* magazine has called Kinder-Care one of "twelve . . . companies that should stand the test of time." PaineWebber recently rated Kinder-Care an "attractive" stock, basing its "optimism" on high divorce rates and on the mistaken assumption that "the baby boomers have just begun to have their families." And a recent issue of *Venture* raved over the "$10 billion" industry: "The barriers can be dealt with and profits can be racked up."

—D.B.

By mid-April, most of the staff had received a 15- to 25-cent raise, and child care for the staff's own children had become free or half-price, depending on the child's age. Hill later testified that he already had been planning to upgrade wages and benefits before he heard about the union, but he couldn't produce any evidence.

Last November, the National Labor Relations Board in Oakland found Kinder-Care guilty of four labor-law violations. The NLRB ordered the company to stop threatening or discharging its employees for union activity, to stop wage and benefit offers meant to discourage union support, and to reinstate Johnnie Bradford with back pay. There's discontent among administrators as well. In another Kinder-Care district, an assistant director has filed an NLRB complaint, hoping to collect nearly $8,000 in pay she says the company owes her for 16 months of working 50 to 80 hours a week. She says Kinder-Care tried to settle out of court for $2,000, if she'd sign a promise never to reveal that she had filed an NLRB suit, or for how much.

IN 1986, KINDER-CARE TOLD THE Securities and Exchange Commission that it had "experienced no difficulty in complying with applicable regulations and licensing requirements," and foresaw no such trouble in the future. However, a spot check of licensing records from four states proves otherwise. In particular, there is considerable evidence that Kinder-Care has understaffed many of its centers, or has staffed them with unqualified people.

Child-care licensing regulations on health, safety, equipment, and staffing vary from state to state. New York, among other states, monitors more strictly those programs that receive public child-care funds targeted for the poor—a major reason why in most states Kinder-Care avoids public funding. (Because of regulations in New York—which Kinder-Care's Ann Muscari calls "a welfare state"—the company has avoided the state entirely.) In every state, child-care licensing is a matter of minimal health and safety standards and is not a guarantee of quality; enforcing regulations easily becomes a cat-and-mouse game. Typically, the licenser's car pulls up, the holes in staffing are quickly plugged by the office help, and the center gets off with a hand slap about staff/child ratios, health forms missing from the files, or an out-of-date inspection sticker on the fire extinguisher.

Strapped by large caseloads and little clout, licensers can't do much more; in California, for example, each worker oversees an average of 303 day-care homes, or 119 centers. After a string of serious violations, a center might be fined, say, $50 a day until it straightens out—a cheaper arrangement for a high-volume chain than hiring enough competent help all along.

Given these limits, various state monitors have found plenty of violations by Kinder-Care. At least three California centers—in Antioch, Pleasanton, and Livermore—opened with no license at all. The nearby Concord center has been repeatedly understaffed, and cited, for two years. In Southfield, Michigan, a licenser in 1984 found a single care giver in charge of 37 children, some of them "wandering throughout the center away from the main group with no supervision available to them. [An] 8-month-old infant had been sitting in a feeding table for 30 minutes with no care giver available; the only 'supervision' came from several four- or five-year-olds who occasionally came by to prop up her bottle."

Last fall in Arlington, Texas, the regional Kinder-Care director's 16-year-old daughter was found caring for a group of children, sometimes on her own, without the required child-care training. In nearby Coppell, a licenser observed children for 45 minutes one afternoon "climbing on furniture, yelling, running, and tipping over equipment [such as] mirrors and chairs while teachers swept the floors." The assistant director there "stated that more structured learning occurs in the morning." In the Dallas suburb of Farmers Branch, one teacher was found alone with 40 children, but the situation was "corrected" on the spot.

In September 1983, a five-year-old girl was killed by a falling storage cabinet at the Kinder-Care center in Woburn, Massachusetts—the kind of awful accident that could happen nearly anywhere. Yet upon closer inspection, licensers cited the center for 63 violations, among them that the director "knowingly employed unqualified staff," that toddlers were "observed wandering about without direction or activities," and that play equipment in the yard was rusted, or had sharp edges and protruding nails. The Massachusetts Office for Children concluded that the licensee was unable "to soundly administer the center; to staff the center with persons who have appropriate experience and/or education; [and] to provide for the basic physical care of children." The center is now in compliance with the law.

WORKING ASSETS, a socially responsible money market fund, chose to divest from Kinder-Care last fall after hearing complaints from child-care activists. "Their labor practices are not up to the standards by which we make investment decisions," says Jane Baker, Working Assets' chief operating officer. "We would love to invest in good child care, but we're having a rough time finding a way to do it."

The entire child-care field pays poorly, and everyone is having trouble hiring care givers and keeping them. The highly profitable Kinder-Care is in a financial position to change that, but for now, there's a stone wall in the way. Even when child-care union activists and others secured $5 million in the 1986 Massachusetts budget to upgrade child-care wages, Kinder-Care turned down its portion, claiming that to upgrade wages in the state-funded centers and not in others would be "inappropriate," and would make parent fees unaffordable.

"We have to keep costs down for parents," says Ann Muscari, "and we do the very best we can for our employees. We shouldn't be held responsible for the whole child-care industry. We engage in free enterprise without apology; it's what made America great. We offer the best quality for the best price. We don't overcharge, and we don't underpay."

Sooner or later, of course, the marketplace will slow Kinder-Care down. What field can grow for long without securing the labor force it needs? The

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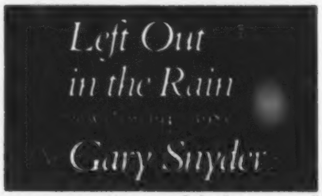

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fear of losing good workers motivated the Campbell Soup Company not to renew its contract with Kinder-Care last September at its Camden, New Jersey, headquarters. "The pay was very low, and there was a lot of turnover among the teachers," says Oliver Mann, Campbell's director of government compliance and child-care coordinator. "Some parents were getting very unhappy, but Kinder-Care was unable to recruit better people." Now that Kinder-Care is gone, head-teacher wages at Campbell's center have risen from $5 an hour to a range of $9 to $18; the director's salary has gone from $17,000 to a range of $25,000 to $30,000. Mann says he "would not recommend a vendor program like Kinder-Care" to other employers.

And yet, who can wait for the market to adjust? "Most families today need child care," says Marcy Whitebook of the Child Care Employee Project, a resource clearinghouse and advocacy organization based in Oakland, California. "It cuts across politics and class, and everyone touched by the need should be contributing to the solution: government, parents, employers, unions. For now, the greatest national 'subsidy' we have is the underpaid child-care workers. About 70 percent of them earn below the poverty level; in 1984, their average earnings were $9,200 a year. Kinder-Care couldn't survive without that subsidy; it's time to get off the high horse that they're 'free enterprise' and doing it without anyone's help.

"If Kinder-Care could pay better wages, keep a stable work force, and still make a profit—well, OK, why not? What we know about young children is that they need a stable environment with consistent, caring adults. You can base your program either on what draws customers, or on what children need—like to depend on their teacher being there six months from now. Children learn what they see, and I'm afraid we're training a lot of them to tune out."

And, as a company slogan reminds parents and investors, "The leaders of tomorrow are at Kinder-Care today."

Dan Bellm has been involved in the child-care movement as a teacher, writer, and advocate since 1973.

Cost and Quality in Child Care: Reality and Myth

by Carollee Howes, Willa Pettygrove, and Marcy Whitebook

In the public policy arena, it is popular to describe *two worlds* of child care. In this view, public sector programs enjoy secure and relatively generous funding. For these programs, quality is presumed to be the natural result of government funding with its requisite special standards and contractual requirements. In contrast, private sector programs depend on parent fees; funding is less predictable and is constrained by market factors, chiefly parents' ability to pay. Licensing standards provide minimum protection and typically do not define optimal quality for such programs. Therefore, definitions of quality in the private sector are driven by parental preference as programs compete for enrollment and attempt to minimize costs.

The two worlds of child care are, in fact, two ends of one continuum; many programs depend on a mix of public, quasi-public, and private funding for survival. And both predominantly public funded and private programs can be found at all points on the continuum of program quality. For the case of child care, a simple dichotomy overlooks the element most central to child care quality, the skilled and professional individuals who direct and are employed in both public and private programs.

Still, many decisions about child care (made by both fee paying parents and child advocates) seem to regress to the assumption "you get what you pay for." Can directors argue that better funding through increased subsidies or higher fees will result in better quality, or can funders and parents rightly demand that programs make better use of the funds they have?

Our answer to both views is: **it depends largely on how a program allocates funds for staff**. Personnel costs typically are the largest part of a program's budget, and it makes good management sense to pay most attention to the biggest budget items. It is also sound practice from a quality perspective; research (beginning with the National Day Care study in the '70s) has demonstrated the link between staff qualifications and the impact of a program on children's development. Now there is a growing body of data which establish a direct link between program funding and the impact of staff performance on child development.

A California Study

California's child care has been a frequent subject of study because of its long history of public support and because of the diversity within its publicly funded programs. In an effort to reduce cost and serve more children, the state has scrutinized the wide cost range found in these various forms of care. For example, a July 1985 report from California's legislative analyst found variations in cost could **not** be tied to the program's location, age of child served, or presence of unionized staff. Rather, the strongest influence on cost seemed to be *historical factors*, usually the legislated funding formulas.

In 1985, Michael Olenick studied 100 centers in the Los Angeles area and grouped them into four quality levels. Overall ratings of quality were related to cost; the annual per child cost was $2,038 for low quality centers and $3,300 for high quality centers. High quality centers spent proportionately more on program-related items and less on items such as rent, utilities, and custodians. In addition, Olenick found a relationship between quality and personnel cost: "Programs at the lower end spent no more than half of their income on staff while programs at the high end spent closer to two thirds. . . . As quality level increased, staff received more . . . overall benefits, and more ongoing training."

In another study, Olenick analyzed quality reviews for 16 state-funded preschool programs in California, 6 of them publicly administered. Here he found quality was positively related to budget allocations for teacher salaries and benefits and negatively related to costs for supervisory personnel. He concluded that the findings for teacher pay and benefits must be due to improved retention of staff. He did **not** find systematic differences in quality between the public and privately administered programs.

We began a study in response to a number of public policy mandates. We wanted to find some solution to the deadlock between factors of inadequate funding, high demand, limited supply, and variable quality. One question was the focus for our study—how are personnel costs related to staffing practices which contribute to positive developmental outcomes for children?

We focused on infant center care because the problems of inadequate funding, high demand, variable quality, and inadequate supply are most evident here. While a preferred form of care, the high cost makes it prohibitive both for parents and providers. At the same time, research has demonstrated the importance of continuity and secure adult/child relationships for optimal development in the first years of life.

Administrators of 25 state subsidized infant/toddler programs provided the data to address the research question. These administrators represented school district administered programs (40%), private non profit agencies (36%), campus child care programs (12%), and vendor/voucher programs which paid for services chosen by parents from diverse private sector sources (12%).

How did variations in cost relate to staffing requirements? Total cost of a program was **not** related to staffing standards, but percent of budget spent on personnel was. For example, administrators who reported staffing requirements which exceeded state licensing standards also reported a high percent of budget spent on personnel. More rigorous staffing standards were **not** associated with increased difficulty in staff recruitment; somewhat higher pay rates may have served as a positive incentive to prospective staff. And programs with larger shares of their budget devoted to staff reported lower staff turnover rates and shorter delays in finding substitute and replacement staff.

These findings seem to restate the obvious, and they validate the intentions and efforts of the successful administrators we interviewed. Those administrators seemed to be making management decisions which put funds where they were most likely to affect quality. For infants and toddlers, where the formation of secure and positive attachments is essential, quality means lower staff turnover and more qualified staff.

Budgeting for Quality

Do these findings, from a small number of publicly funded programs in California, have relevance for the much broader and more diverse world of child care? We believe they do.

The results of our study, combined with Michael Olenick's work, provide evidence that there is a link between more judicious budgeting for personnel and enhanced program quality. This evidence contradicts some common misconceptions:

"If I pay staff more, my program will be too expensive." Higher pay can result in higher program costs. However, the California studies found that the percent of total budget spent on personnel, not the total cost of care, was related to quality in terms of staff turnover and qualifications.

"Parents already think staff make too much." Parents who think this can easily be educated with salary survey data from CCEP or comparable information from their locality. The National Association for the Education of Young Children offers "In Whose Hands" (A Demographic Fact Sheet on Child Care Providers, 1985, #760), which documents the problems of pay and status in the child care profession. Here is one statistic: 58% of all center staff in the US currently have incomes below the federal definition of poverty. Moreover, parents quickly grasp the relationship between staffing requirements and turnover rates and the quality of services they receive. This is especially the case for infants and toddlers, where parental concerns about attachment and stability of care are paramount.

"Public programs can meet strict staffing requirements because they have better funding, but my program can't." It is certainly reasonable to expect public programs to meet optimal standards when their funding is relatively more stable and generous. We would like to see funding formulas which direct recipients of public subsidies to give budget priority to staff pay. Olenick's findings demonstrate that programs in the private sector do find ways to support high quality through their staffing policies. And public programs are not without funding problems. In California, for example, publicly funded programs face limits on cost of living adjustments.

"It's getting hard to find qualified staff; we need to lower standards." Reducing standards is a short term solution which in the long term stands to weaken the status and position of child care. Our survey indicated that programs committed to better funding for direct care and teaching staff did not report as many problems in recruitment and retention. We do not deny that there is a crisis in staffing. We believe that continued low pay, along with weakened standards, will only worsen it.

Good pay, benefits, and working conditions are incentives which directors can use to attract and retain qualified staff, and thereby enhance the quality of the services they offer. The task is to find ways to make the best use of limited funds and other resources to increase these incentives, and at the same time to improve overall funding for both public and private programs. CCEP is a resource in helping child care administrators with these tasks.

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The Child Care Employee Project advocates for better pay and working conditions for staff, in the belief that such improvements will enhance quality by improving staff morale and performance and by reducing staff turnover. A list of publications and services offered by CCEP is available from: Child Care Employee Project, PO Box 5603, Berkeley, CA 94705, (415) 653-9889.

B. Working for Change

Research Report

Beyond Babysitting

Changing the Treatment and Image of Child Caregivers

by **Willa Pettygrove, Marcy Whitebook, and Mary Weir**

Rationale

More than 2 million people, almost all women, earn their living caring for children full time; thousands more supplement their income with part-time child care work (Ruopp et al. 1979; Divine-Hawkins 1981). Child caregivers face conditions similar to those in other female-dominated fields—low pay, low status, and little job security. Most child caregivers live on the edge of poverty (Rubin 1982).

Although the need for good child care has gained increasing public attention, the workers who meet this need seem almost invisible, except for the unfortunate reports of child abuse or the rare stereotyped images of babysitters who love to play with children and earn pin money on the side. The reality is that most caregivers are women in their mid-twenties to late forties who support themselves and their families. Many have also invested heavily in training and education (Ruopp et al. 1979; Whitebook et al. 1982).

Until recently, even the child care community ignored the conditions faced by its members. The high rate of turnover and burnout among child care employees has finally sparked concern (Seiderman 1978; Whitebook et al. 1982; Hostetler 1984). It appears that qualified workers are leaving the field, and that student interest in child care as a career has begun to decline.

Only by understanding the origins of these problems can workable solutions be developed. Yet, very little research has focused on child caregivers. A few studies attribute burnout and dissatisfaction to the nature of the work (Mattingly 1977; Freudenberger 1977) or the personality types of the workers (Freudenberger 1977; Reed 1977; Sutton 1977). More recent studies identify poor compensation as the key to dissatisfaction in both centers and family day care homes (Anderson 1980; Groves 1982; Whitebook et al. 1982). Organizational problems, many resulting from poor funding, have limited the availability of breaks, substitutes, and other personnel practices that might ease the tensions created by low pay (Maslach and Pines 1977).

This Research Report summarizes the findings of two studies undertaken to describe child caregivers' perceptions of themselves and the profession and to collect information on the compensation received for child care work.

Willa Pettygrove, Ph.D., is Program Analyst for the California Child Development Programs Advisory Committee, and a child care planner.

Mary Weir, Ph.D., is Professor of Child Development and Parent Education, Long Beach City College, Long Beach, California.

Marcy Whitebook, M.A., is Coordinator of the Child Care Employee Project in Oakland, California.

Methodology

Surveys of child caregivers were conducted in Illinois in 1975 and in California in 1982. Both used the same questionnaire, written by Mary Weir.

The questionnaire consists of two sections. The first 30 questions cover perceptions of job status and satisfaction and gather information about training, pay, and benefits. The second part employs the Cornell University Jobs Description Index (JDI) (Hulin and Smith 1964; 1965). The JDI was the only valid and reliable index available in 1975 that was sufficiently relevant for child caregivers. This index produces job satisfaction scores on five dimensions: people, pay, promotion, work, and supervision.

Weir surveyed 217 child care workers in Illinois in 1975. As president of the Illinois AEYC and chair of a statewide committee revising child care licensing standards, she enlisted wide participation in her study.

The Child Care Employee Project surveyed a second group of 86 caregivers in 1982. The Project selected 14 centers in West Los Angeles that represented the full range of program sponsorship and type within the community.

It was expected that the data from these two surveys would provide many contrasts and suggest possible directions for further research. Instead, the data were very similar.

Results

Similarities

Sample. Despite the differences in time and place, the two groups had many similarities (Table 1), although the Illinois study sampled a slightly larger proportion

Table 1. Center type, program sponsorship, job titles, and education.

Center type	Illinois	California
Day care	52.5%	68.6%
Nursery school	26.3%	26.7%
Other	21.2%	4.7%
Sponsorship		
Public	37.6%	35.3%
Private nonprofit	34.7%	27.1%
Private for-profit	27.7%	37.6%
Job title		
Director	12.5%	10.5%
Teacher	54.7%	64.0%
Assistant/aide	32.8%	25.6%
Education		
High school	11.3%	4.8%
2 years college	37.3%	58.3%
4 years college	28.3%	19.0%
Beyond B.A.	23.1%	17.9%

Table 2. Median incomes of service workers (including private household, food, health, and protective service workers).

Type of work	1975	1982
Child care	$5,100	$10,135
Female service workers	$5,204	$14,669
Male service workers	$9,488	
Elementary teachers	$10,292*	$11,908*

* For 9 months, other salaries based on 12 months.

Sources: Census Bureau, n.d.; U.S. Department of Labor 1980; News of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, no. 82-227 (August 12, 1982).

of nursery school personnel, and the California study included some workers in public school programs which are known for their relatively good funding and pay levels. Women outnumbered men by more than ten to one in both groups. Respondents ranged in age from the late teens to older than 60.

Salaries. One might expect that with seven years between surveys, there might be some change in pay and benefit levels. The monthly salary range in 1975 was $346 to $1,383. In 1982, the range was $346 to $2,018! Between 1975 and 1982, the Consumer Price Index increased 79.4 percent [News of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, nos. 76-45 (January 21, 1976) and 82-444 (November 23, 1982)], so in terms of buying power, the monthly salaries for many child care employees actually *decreased*. These findings confirm that child caregivers scarcely earn a living wage. When compared to median annual earnings of female service workers in 1975 and 1982, child caregivers' wages look even worse (Table 2).

Fringe benefits. The number of workers receiving various types of fringe benefits are summarized in Table 3. There were no significant differences in benefits reported by the two groups. Only a small percentage in both groups received maternity leave, despite the fact that so many of these workers are of childbearing age. In both studies, employees of private programs were least likely to receive any fringe benefits.

Job tenure. The majority of the staff in these two surveys had been on the job no longer than two years (Table 4). Although directors and head teachers might be expected to remain longer in their jobs, length of employment was not significantly related to job title for either group. Of course, workers who leave their jobs may move to other child care positions: 87 percent of the Illinois group and 81 percent of the California group stated they would look for the same job in the future.

Attitude toward work. The results of these two surveys strongly confirm earlier findings that while child care staff like working with children and enjoy their work autonomy (intrinsic aspects), they are very dissatisfied with their compensation and working conditions (extrinsic aspects) (Whitebook et al. 1982; Pettygrove 1981). Nearly 95 percent of the respondents in Illinois and California reported that their pleasure on the job derived from involvement with the children. More than two-thirds reported that being with children was the most enjoyable aspect of their job. Almost 50 percent found "watching children discover for themselves" the source of greatest satisfaction.

Autonomy in decision making probably augments the satisfaction gained from interacting with children (Table 5). Aides in both groups were least likely to have input in any decisions.

Scores for the JDI were obtained for about one-half of the respondents in both groups. However, separate analyses indicated that those with complete responses were very similar to the full sample for both groups. The JDI scores confirmed the contrast between intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of job satisfaction. Average satisfaction scores on the scales for people, work, and supervision were quite high in contrast to lower scores for pay and promotion (Table 6).

Self-perception. Despite debates about job titles, duties, and compensation, most

Table 3. Benefits received.

	Illinois	California
Staff room	31.4%	25.9%
Pension	16.0%	17.6%
Health plan*	36.5%	37.6%
Paid holidays	76.9%	85.9%
Maternity leave	8.2%	11.8%
Sick leave*	64.6%	75.3%
Paid vacation*	56.4%	71.8%
Social security*	76.7%	64.7%

* Recommended by the NAEYC Ad Hoc Task Group on Nomenclature, Salaries, Benefits, and Status of the Early Childhood Profession (November 3, 1983 draft). Also recommended: paid preparation time, breaks, and staff development opportunities.

Table 4. Length of employment.

	Illinois	California
Less than 1 month	6.5%	0%
1 month - 1 year	33.8%	37.6%
1-2 years	25.9%	25.9%
2-5 years	18.5%	22.4%
More than 5 years	15.3%	14.1%

Table 5. Decision making about work.

Respondents who reported "a great deal of freedom" in relation to handling of:

	Illinois	California
Children	80.7%	75.0%
Establishment of routines	65.3%	52.4%
Activities	76.6%	77.4%
Procurement of materials	43.3%	53.1%

Table 6. JDI scores and summary of analysis of variance.

		Group means			
Scale	Maximum	Illinois	California	F value	Significance
People	18	16.9143	16.2432	5.5811	.0195
Pay	8	2.9439	2.7073	.375	.5413
Promotion	9	3.0899	4.0857	4.1405	.044
Work	18	14.039	14.0811	.0098	.9214
Supervision	18	16.5429	15.8718	2.8045	.0962

agree that child care work is skilled. When asked to select occupations most similar to theirs in status and prestige, respondents were most likely to identify with professions and trades generally considered to be highly skilled, such as medicine, engineering, and carpentry. Few child caregivers identified with office, industrial, or casual workers. The high level of college education of the respondents may account for these perceptions.

When asked to compare their benefits package to that of public elementary school teachers, 82 percent of the Illinois group and 70 percent of the California group reported that teachers received better benefits. Respondents cited the role of the school board, teachers' professional organizations, public opinion, and better training as reasons for the disparities.

Most respondents had never seen their work portrayed in novels, movies, or comic strips. About one-half had seen a television portrayal, possibly identifying with similar roles such as public school teachers or mothers (DeGooyer and Borah 1982).

Differences

The differences between the two samples are few, but they do suggest directions for future research.

Education. Although the Illinois group had a higher average education level, the California sample included more caregivers with training beyond high school. This seems to reflect the different kinds of training available to preschool teachers in the two areas. In 1975 Illinois did not have the well-established system of two-year college programs that have been available to Californians. Different credential and licensing requirements in the two states may also be reflected in these differences. However, the average educational levels for both groups far exceed those of staff in the National Day Care Study (Ruopp et al. 1979).

Job satisfaction. Although there were significant differences on the JDI scales according to the job titles of those surveyed and the types of programs in which they were employed, there were only two scales on which significant differences appeared between the 1975 and 1982 samples. Satisfaction scores on the promotion scale were significantly lower for the Illinois group ($p < .05$), which may reflect the differences in options in the two states. California has a large number of publicly funded programs within the public school system which creates a second range on the career ladder for child caregivers; no such program exists in Illinois.

JDI scores on the people scale were significantly lower for the California group ($p < .02$). Given the positive orientation of caregivers toward the intrinsic values of the work, and increased attention to professionalism in the field, this result is puzzling. Perhaps the California group's responses represent a more realistic appraisal of problems with their employment, relative to rising expectations in the profession. Workers may apply this growing dissatisfaction to themselves for tolerating and staying in this difficult field. Others may measure their performance against the high idealism associated with serving young children and their families. This difference in people scores may reflect a loss in job satisfaction between 1975 and 1982.

Self-perception. This apparent loss in job satisfaction could also be inferred from respondents' ranking of their work relative to other occupations. California respondents more frequently ranked themselves with lower status jobs ($p < .001$). In addition, Illinois respondents were more likely to judge media portrayals as realistic ($p = .01$) and positive ($p = .05$). These differences suggest a growing dissatisfaction with public images or increased awareness of the public's low esteem for child care work.

What is to be done?

These findings help define the problems facing the early childhood profession. They confirm some of the most negative and positive assumptions about child care as work. Despite growing concern within the field there has been virtually no concrete improvement in compensation. Even so, the results confirm that child caregivers respect the work they do and have a sense of satisfaction and challenge about their daily work.

Within the child care community there appears to be consensus that wages, working conditions, and status need to be improved. General agreement exists that the contradictions between the intrinsic value of caring for children and the extrinsic payoffs for those who do it must be resolved. There is less consensus on the best means to accomplish these tasks.

Different communities and groups of workers may require varied strategies to implement these recommendations. A focus on media may be a more efficient use of time in an urban area than in a small community. Raising fees in a low-income area will only alienate parents who are struggling to pay the current cost of care. A remedy for the problems of staff in a large school district program would probably not help those working in proprietary centers or parent cooperatives.

Without people to implement these strategies, the best ideas will be useless. Although there are small groups of child care staff advocating for more and better services, the majority of caregivers are only marginally involved in such activity. Only about 40,000 of the several hundred thousand employed in early childhood programs are members of NAEYC, and only a few thousand child care workers are represented by unions.

How can caregivers join together to discuss strategies and become involved in efforts to improve their situation? What motivates some child care workers to passively accept their situation, while others seek to change it? Are turnover, high unemployment, and women's limited job options to blame for such resignation? Or do staff pull back from demanding more because they fear increased fees for parents—many of them poorly paid women workers?

The results reported here suggest a contributing factor in the lack of mobilization is our own self-image. The majority of workers in both groups see themselves as highly skilled people. Many have invested years in educating themselves to become high quality caregivers. It may be overwhelming to recognize how little society values these skills and educational qualifications. Workers must either re-evaluate perceptions of child care as skilled work, or confront our low social status and challenge it. The latter choice involves questioning society's basic priorities and engaging in a steep uphill battle.

Part of the image problem resides in the contradiction between the intrinsic value of the work and the lack of extrinsic payoffs for those who do it. It is important that caregivers overcome the trap of accepting low pay because they love their work.

At the same time, it is important to investigate further the reasons for the contradiction. For example, there has been much discussion about the need to define the work, and its workers, as professional. However, most uses of the term professional have not been based on sociological research and theory on the way professions are formed and maintained as institutions. The contradiction may also arise from society's devaluation of mothering and other work by women (Chodorow 1978; Lightfoot 1977).

Our findings about self-image suggest a cautionary note. Constant attention to the problem and to the need for enhanced images may serve the profession's long term objectives. In the short term, however, it may leave workers caught between rising expectations and disillusionment over actual conditions. Caregivers need an understanding of the history of child care (currently caught between the Head Start hopes of the 1960s War on Poverty and the 1980s realities regarding the feminization of poverty), and its vulnerability to political and social change. Those who work for change must adopt this perspective, and avoid offering empty promises to caregivers who are already stressed by their work and family commitments. The field must acknowledge people's anger and disappointment.

There are models for transforming legitimate anger and disappointment into constructive efforts for change. Feminists, ecologists, Third World activists, and others have used consciousness raising groups to validate people's feelings of helplessness and discontent, and to challenge the isolation that keeps people from becoming involved. Early childhood staff have begun and must continue to develop their own support groups—NAEYC Affiliates or other organizations—which mobilize members to become politically involved in these issues.

The responsibility to involve others in change efforts is another task for already overburdened workers. It does seem ironic and unjust that the victims of a problem are the only ones working to change it. As early childhood staff work to understand and motivate their colleagues, they will build a base for changing public opinion. As staff enhance and project a positive image of their work, moving beyond babysitting, they will support others' efforts to improve the status of all working women and their children.

This project was partially supported by the Child Care Employee Project, a national resource clearinghouse for materials to help child care staff upgrade their working conditions. For more information about this study and other resources, contact CCEP, P.O. Box 5603, Berkeley, CA 94705. 415-653-9889.

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Results of NAEYC's Child Care Salaries and Working Conditions survey are now being compiled, and will be reported in the September issue of *Young Children*.

NOTE: NAEYC's Governing Board is working to establish a common nomenclature for early childhood professionals, to set guidelines for appropriate salaries and benefits, and to initiate efforts to enhance the self-image and public perception of early childhood professionals. At its July 1984 meeting, the Board will approve a draft to be published in the November issue of *Young Children* to solicit comments from NAEYC membership. The position statement will be presented for Board approval at the spring 1985 meeting.

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SALARY SURVEYS

Child care, we know, is an essential service, helping millions of working parents -- especially women -- to gain economic self-sufficiency. For children, quality preschool education is an important part of intellectual and social growth, and the key to quality is the consistent presence of a loving, skilled, well-trained child care worker. Yet for the million or more people who work in child care in the U.S.-- mostly women -- the rewards are low pay, few benefits, poor working conditions, and constant turnover.

Over 70% of child care workers earn wages below the poverty level. In 1986, the average salary for a child care worker in the U.S. was $9,464 a year -- well below even poorly paid workers such as cashiers, bank tellers, bartenders, and receptionists. For an in-home provider, the average salary was an appalling $4,732 (*CCEP News*, 1987). Fewer than half of all child care workers receive medical or vacation benefits. Many report that they routinely work overtime hours for no pay at all. Turnover may be as high as 42% a year, a rate far exceeding the national average of 10% in other human services (NAEYC, 1986). Few people can sustain themselves for long in such an unrewarding field -- but the number of children who need child care continues to soar. The result is a crisis-level shortage of child care workers nationwide (Whitebook, 1986).

In recent years, child care workers have begun to speak out about this situation and to seek remedies. One of the first barriers we have faced in our organizing and education efforts has been the lack of reliable, consistent data. When we say that job turnover is excessive, we are asked, "How excessive?" When we demand better benefits, we are asked, "What benefits do you get now?" When we call for higher salaries, we are asked, "Higher than what?" The ambiguous national data available from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics have been of limited help (Phillips and Whitebook, 1986).

The first step in most communities, therefore, has been to gather local information about existing salaries, benefits and working conditions. Child care groups throughout the country have found useful data for their efforts to upgrade the field, but they have also found that such a survey is no small undertaking.

The Child Care Employee Project began collecting local child care workforce data in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1977. Since then we have conducted surveys and assisted survey groups in dozens of other communities. For a fuller discussion of this topic, and a copy of our widely tested survey form, see CCEP's booklet *Salary Surveys: How to Conduct One in Your Community*.

Why Conduct a Survey?

A salary survey of child care workers will probably reveal few surprises to those who conduct it. We all know from our own experience about problems with wages, benefits and working conditions. But many people do not know. A salary survey is a valid and effective way to make others see what we have experienced.

Survey results can open up discussion on wages and other issues, and can serve as a clear rationale for a raise. Tennessee Head Start officials, for example, were so embarrassed by the results of a survey of their employees that they raised salaries 6.7% -- a small but welcome beginning. In September 1986, the Massachusetts Head Start Directors Association obtained state funding to cover 15-30% salary increases for staff, after demonstrating that low wages were undermining quality and fueling an intolerable turnover rate. With clear, well-presented data, the discussion can shift from whether wages and benefits should be improved to when and how much.

Salary and benefit information is crucial in planning child care program budgets, whether a program is starting up, expanding, or simply calculating next year's expenses. Child care centers and resource and referral agencies are frequently asked about appropriate salary and benefit packages. Although most current pay levels are unacceptably low, survey data can be a helpful basis for estimating what staff should be paid.

Survey data can be used to enlist support from parents, political leaders, and the general public. Public policy makers, and parents who use child care, often lack a clear notion of the economics of a child care program. Salary and benefit data can give politicians and public agencies dramatic, startling evidence of the results of budget cuts and low funding. Parents can better understand the need for modest fee increases or fundraisers. The news that parking lot attendants earn more than trained child care workers gives new meaning to the campaign for "comparable worth."

A survey can raise the consciousness of child care workers themselves. Those who spend their entire work day with children, isolated from other adults in the field, may not realize how many people share their problems of low pay and poor working conditions. One common feature of "burnout" is the sense that no solutions exist or that they are unreachable. By participating in a salary survey, staff can gain a sense of shared problems and can begin to talk about solutions. The data can help them develop reasonable requests for improvement from their center's board or owner. A survey conducted every year or two is an effective way to measure change -- for the better, we hope!

Of course, there are limits and pitfalls. Survey results are sometimes used to justify low pay and no change at all. Given your results, some employers may argue that their salaries are sufficient because they pay the "going rate." Data must be accompanied by explanations of how child care work as a whole, like other female-dominated professions, is undervalued in our society and does not provide a living wage. Survey data alone, after all, only tell what is, not what should be.

A survey won't guarantee higher salaries. Survey results may generate interest, dismay or shock, but they won't automatically lead to improvement. The survey could simply leave you burned out and buried in numbers which have little meaning to the community. Be prepared to commit the time and energy not only to complete the survey but to publicize its results effectively and create a plan of action.

Finding Help

Most useful child care salary and benefit surveys have been conducted by child care employees themselves. But surveys require time, money and specialized skills which are often hard to come by. (A good rule of thumb is to estimate how much time you need to do a survey, then double it!) Here are some ideas to help you find outside resources:

- Apply for a grant from a group that shares your concerns, such as NAEYC or its local affiliate in your area, business and professional women's groups, social service-oriented foundations, etc.

- Ask your local child care resource and referral agency whether it can contribute staff or telephone time, postage, lists of programs to contact and/or publicity.

- Discuss the project with university or college departments in child development, education, city planning or social work. They might be interested in supporting the survey as part of a research project, student internship, or work-study program. They may also be willing to donate student time, consultation about research methods and/or computer access.

- Form a coalition of child care advocates (center staff, resource and referral staff, NAEYC members, early childhood instructors, etc.) to conduct the survey as a joint community project. In this way you'll have more volunteers to help with the survey, and a broader number of people invested in collecting accurate, useful results.

- Find out whether community and government agencies (such as resource and referral agencies or social service departments) already collect some of the information you need, or might be willing to incorporate your questions into their routine record keeping. In Minnesota, state officials have added salary questions to their annual statewide enrollment survey of licensed child care centers.

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RAISING SALARIES:
Strategies That Work

Child care providers, advocates and policy makers are grappling with how to increase child care salaries and improve working conditions. But because public funding remains limited, and most programs must rely on parent fees for their income, there is much consternation about how this can be done. The central dilemma is finding a means to balance the needs of families for affordable child care services with the needs of staff for fair and decent employment so that quality programs can be achieved.

While our nation is still a long way from having solved this dilemma, we are heartened by the many experiments that have been tried so far. In communities throughout the country, child care staff have recognized the need for advocacy, and have understood that in becoming advocates for their own economic well-being, they become advocates for high quality child care. They have built alliances with parents and other community members, and are discovering innovative solutions to the staffing crisis.

For many of us, advocating for ourselves runs contrary to our professional training and self-image. We have been taught to consider the needs of children first and foremost, and voicing our own concerns feels awkward or even inappropriate. But the current conditions most child care staff face directly impinge on the quality of care children receive. Thus, the real violation of our professional ethics lies in the failure to speak up for what we know impacts on children the most, even if we are inappropriately accused of self-interest. Like teachers and nurses of previous generations, we must recognize the link between our own well-being and the quality of the services we provide.

In each of the examples below, the people involved had to identify the potentially available resources and the decision makers who had the power to allocate these resources. They could then determine what solution would be most effective in their specific situation. It was from these decisions that a strategy emerged.

Therefore, if you are considering strategies for raising salaries, we encourage you to use these examples to gain a sense of what is possible and to stimulate your thinking. But first, consider the following questions:

1. What sources of funding does your program rely on?

2. Can salaries in your program be increased by re-allocating existing resources, or does your program need additional dollars to make this possible?

3. If new money is needed, how can existing resources be expanded? Are there other untapped sources?

4. Whether you are considering existing or new resources, who has the power to make the decision to allocate funds so that salaries can be raised?

5. What approaches or combinations of approaches will best influence decision makers, and what alliances must be built to influence those decision makers?

The following examples describe how some salary initiatives got started, what barriers were overcome, and what was accomplished. We recognize that these initiatives are only small steps forward where a giant leap is really needed. Yet taken together, they represent an important beginning in the movement to increase child care employee compensation, and thus to improve the quality of care for young children.

For a full copy of this report, containing many more examples, contact the Child Care Employee Project and order the booklet, "Raising Salaries: Strategies That Work."

* * *

Center

University View Child Care Center (UVCCC)
Fairfax, Virginia

Getting Started

University View Child Care Center was one of the first programs to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. The director used the center's new accreditation status as a vehicle to propose salary increases for employees.

Overcoming Barriers

UVCCC is part of the Salvation Army and their board determines salaries. By comparing staff members' salaries with similar professionals in the county, the director found that their salaries were falling behind comparable centers in the county subsidy program. Using this information, the director wrote a request for salary increases to the board, showing the need and proposing solutions. A chart was included that pointed out the teachers' educational qualifications, years of experience and longevity at the center. With the assistance of a parent, the director devised a salary scale with step increases to encourage teachers to continue their work.

Getting Started

The board approved the salary compensation plan as proposed. Additional funds for salaries came from an increase in the countybase reimbursement rate, a minimal increase in tuition and an expansion of the school-age child care program. The overall increase for salaries was approximately 20%, which included step and once-a-year raises. This plan placed UVCCC salaries in the top range of similar agencies in their area.

For further information contact:

George Farrell, Director
University View Child Care Center
P.O. Box 125
Fairfax Station, VA 22039
(703) 385-8702

Center

Oakland/Piedmont Jewish Community Center
Early Childhood Program
Oakland, California

Getting Started

Teachers and other employees at this Jewish community center child care program are represented by Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 535. In February 1987, the union asked for a 9.5% staff raise. The center management's counter offer was a 2% increase, a cap on health benefits and a two-tier wage structure.

Overcoming Barriers

Employees turned to the children's parents for support with a week-long compaign of informational picketing and individual and group parent meetings. One leaflet began: "Living on a shoestring is no way to keep your mind in the classroom." Since no agreement was reached with the center's board, a strike was called for early March.

The staff reported for work as usual on the day before the strike began, but they asked parents to keep their children home as a demonstration of support. Only 5 of the 90 children showed up. During the 7-day strike, about 90% of the center's families continued to support the teachers (and meet their own child care needs) by establishing "strike schools" in their homes.

Getting Results

The final compromise agreement ratified by union members retained the original full health benefits for staff, reduced the differential in the two-tier wage structure and provided for a 3% raise retroactive to January 1 as well as a 3% raise in September. Two further raises have since been negotiated: 5% for January 1, 1988 and another 5% as of January 1, 1989. These raises have come from fundraising, and from the regular annual fee increases to parents.

For further information contact:

Marcy Libster
Oakland/Piedmont Jewish Community Center
493 Crofton #1
Oakland, CA 94610
(415) 452-4953

Center

The Acorn School
San Antonio, Texas

Getting Started

The Acorn School is a non-profit half-day nursery school supported by parent fees. When the directors began the school eight years ago, they knew from previous experience in child care that the essential ingredients of a good program were low staff/child ratios and a good teaching staff along with a sound child development philosophy. They were determined to maintain ratios of 1:5 and to pay more than the going salary rate in their community in order to attract qualified teaching staff.

Overcoming Barriers

Recognizing the need to provide quality and still maintain fees that would not discourage parents from enrollment, the decision was made to run a potential deficit each year ($25,000 in 1988), and to raise funds outside of parent fees to make up the difference. In the fall, the parents are presented with an annual report that explains the deficit, including an explanation of staff salaries, and are invited to make tax-deductible contributions. In February a benefit similar to a raffle drawing is held. 250 tickets are sold for $100 each. During a big party celebrating the event, the tickets are drawn for prizes that this year included $10,000 in cash, round trip tickets donated by American Airlines, about a dozen weekends at area hotels and more than 200 prizes donated by local businesses.

Getting Results

The Acorn School raised almost $15,000 from this event. These funds, along with smaller donations received throughout the year, allow the school to maintain low staff/child ratios and pay teaching staff about 80% higher than the going rate in the community.

For further information contact:

Rich Lange
The Acorn School
3501 Broadway
San Antonio, TX 78209
(512) 826-8804

System	University of Connecticut Storrs, Connecticut
Getting Started	Teachers at the University of Connecticut campus day care center and lab school won representation by the University of Connecticut Professional Employees Union, a local of the American Federation of Teachers.
Overcoming Barriers	The union requested a comparable worth study that would look at child care teachers in relation to other university employees such as librarians, computer programmers, nurses, doctors and department managers. The 3-year study (1981-83) by a joint union/management committee used four major criteria to assess compatibility: independent action and authority, knowledge and skills required to do the job, complexity and variety of tasks, and leadership.
Getting Results	After a year and a half of negotiations, the union secured new pay scales in 1985 (retroactive to July 1, 1984) for 12 groups of employees, including child care teachers. With funds from the university -- and from a rate increase for parents, who are mostly union members themselves -- the base child care teaching salary rose from $14,500 to $18,452 in the first year. After a second negotiation in 1986, the base salary rose to $19,500. The union hopes to negotiate an additional $3,000 to $4,000 per employee over the next 3 years to reward years of experience on the job. But a continued struggle is expected over the extent of the university's responsibility to raise child care staff wages -- as opposed to passing the costs on to parents. Child care staff are still trying to reach parity with certain categories of (mostly male) state workers, such as skilled tradespeople, data processors and engineers.
For further information contact:	Jill Hurst Connecticut State Federation of Teachers 1781 Wilbur Cross Parkway Berlin, CT 06037 (203) 828-1400

Community

Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota

Getting Started

In 1988, the McKnight Foundation in Minneapolis, in its Aid to Families in Poverty Program, targeted the area of child care staff wages and benefits. According to Nancy Latimer of McKnight, the goal was to develop ways to enhance the salaries and status of child care staff without passing on the whole cost to parents.

Overcoming Barriers

In March 1988, the Greater Minneapolis Day Care Association and the Early Childhood Directors' Association received a grant of $468,000 for a 3 year period. Under this grant, child care programs in the Twin City area can apply for small incentive grants of up to $10,000 and 80 hours of high level consultation over 3 years to improve their financial position and become stronger and better organizations. Grants can be used to upgrade salaries or benefit plans directly or to improve the organization's ability to generate more revenue through activities like marketing.

An advisory committee has established the following criteria for the awarding of grants and consultation time: (1) the program sets specific annual targets for improving staff wages, benefits and working conditions; (2) child care staff and parents are involved in planning the targets and implementation plans; (3) the programs serve some low or moderate income families; (4) the programs are representative of the child care marketplace; and (5) the programs make plans for retaining the improvements when the McKnight funding ends.

Getting Results

The progress of this initiative will be carefully evaluated. At the moment, the plan is for programs receiving consultation and incentive grants to be monitored and compared to programs that receive training but no grants and programs that receive neither grants nor training.

In order to affect the wider child care market and establish the feeling that "It can happen in my program too," there will be wide dissemination of the means by which programs are able to bring about changes and the improvements that result.

For further information contact:

Dale Anderson or Jim Greenman
The Greater Minneapolis Day Care Association
1006 West Lake
Minneapolis, MN 55408
(612) 823-7243

State

Massachusetts

Getting Started

During the early 1980's, a broad-based Child Care Coalition of administrators, teachers, parents, state legislators and other advocates became a well-organized, highly visible force in Massachusetts politics. A severe teacher shortage, largely due to unattractively low salaries, was one of the most prominent issues raised by the Coalition. Governor Michael Dukakis, whose campaign had stressed a strong commitment to child care and other human services, took office in 1984.

Overcoming Barriers

During his first year of office, Governor Dukakis created the Day Care Partnership Project, a task force of consumers, providers, advocates and state officials charged with developing a series of recommendations for improving and expanding child care services in the state. A series of statewide forums was convened to elicit public testimony.

Getting Results

The Governor's 1986 budget, released in January 1985, recommended $5 million to raise child care salaries, in addition to $2 million for cost-of-living increases. The final allocation was $4.2 million, in addition to the cost-of-living funds. This allocation represented the first time that a state legislature had earmarked funds exclusively to raise child care provider's salaries. Every program with a contract with the state was eligible for this money. In September 1986, Massachusetts' Head Start programs also received a salary-improvement fund of $2.8 million to assist them in attracting and retaining qualified staff.

The 1987 budget included $5.22 million for salary increases; the 1988 budget, $5.8 million. Advocates have now formed a Budget Endorsers Group, which has drafted goals for three more years of salary upgrading.

To be eligible for the day care funds, centers or family day care systems submit detailed information about how much money they need in order to bring their staff wages into line with the Governor's recommendations. Staff with the lowest salaries receive the largest raises.

In the first year, unfortunately, the state did not set aside money to help parents pay for care, although the Child Care Coalition had lobbied hard about affordability issues. The 1987 state budget included $250,000 for a scholarship program to assist parents with child care costs stemming from salary increases; the 1988 budget funded a study of child care affordability, due to be released in June 1988.

For further information contact:

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COMPARABLE WORTH:
Questions and Answers
for Early Childhood Staff

In recent years comparable worth has emerged as a strategy for women and/or minority workers seeking to upgrade wages. Clericals, nurses, teachers and other service workers have demanded equitable pay for jobs which are performed almost exclusively by women. Understandably, many child care advocates are wondering how to utilize comparable worth to upgrade early childhood jobs.

What exactly is comparable worth?

Most generally, "comparable worth" refers to a movement to get wages to reflect the value of work as opposed to the sex or race of the worker. In this regard, comparable worth encompasses a wide range of efforts such as educational campaigns, collective bargaining and strike actions, law suits and legislation.

More specifically, comparable worth refers to a job evaluation method used to assess whether pay discrepancies coincide with differences in skill and responsibility. It also creates a framework for offering wages based on a worker's contribution (i.e. the effort, skill, experience and responsibility involved in a job) rather than on assumptions about the worker's needs (e.g. a woman works for "pin money," rather than to support her family; therefore she needs less). In other words, comparable worth is a tool for examining how salaries at a particular workplace are and should be determined.

How do comparable worth efforts differ from attempts to secure equal pay for equal work?

Both are calls to abandon discrimination in the labor force. Equal pay for equal work seeks to end the long-held practice of paying women and minorities lower wages than white males for the same job. For example, prior to the mid-sixties it was both legal and common for a male teacher to receive a higher salary than a female or Third World counterpart. The 1963 Equal Pay Act outlawed paying different wages for equal work, and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act called for an end to sex discrimination in the workplace and other situations.

Despite these laws and many successful attempts to enforce them, inequality continues to pervade the labor force. Women and minorities have been blocked from certain types of employment which have traditionally been the exclusive purview of white men. Affirmative action strategies have emerged to rectify this inequality of access. Throughout the seventies increased numbers of women and minorities entered trades and professions barred to generations preceding them. However, the average woman worker still earns about two thirds of her male counterpart's wage!

Women earn less than men primarily because most of them are segregated into lower-paying jobs. Eighty percent of women work in five major job categories, all of which are at the lowest end of the pay scale. Even as the number of working women increases, women are shepherded into low-paid clerical, teaching, nursing, sales or other service jobs. Equal pay for equal work does not address the inequalities caused by the widespread occupational segregation in this country.

Growing awareness of the structural inequalities of the work force has led to the development of the comparable worth strategy. Simply put, comparable worth advocates call for equal pay for equivalent work. It enables women (and minority) workers to compare jobs held primarily by women in one workplace with those held by men. You may be familiar with such problems in your workplace. Often teachers and aides in a child care program, all of whom are women, will receive a lower hourly rate than the custodial staff who are male, even when teachers and aides are required to have more training and experience. Nationally, women with three years of college earn on the average $2,000 a year less than men with an eighth grade education!

To date, some legal precedents to support comparable worth strategies have been established, but the final status of comparable worth as a basis for discrimination under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act has yet to be determined. In addition to litigation, advocates in several communities have worked to pass laws or develop regulations which mandate public sector employers to address comparable worth. Finally, public sector workers represented by a union have also successfully raised comparable worth at the bargaining table.

Can comparable worth help child care workers?

Yes and no. Theoretically, child care workers are prime candidates for a comparable worth strategy. The child care work force is female-dominated and characterized by low wages. Despite considerable education and training, child care workers are likely to find themselves at the bottom of any organizational pay scale. Thus, there exist numerous possibilities for employing comparable worth arguments when seeking to educate and influence those who set child care wages.

The structure of the child care delivery system, however, works against widespread use of comparable worth job evaluations as a specific method to remedy discrimination for the majority of child care workers. Successful comparable worth efforts have focused on single employers with large numbers of workers in a variety of distinct, codified job categories. There should be large numbers of women performing particular jobs that compare favorably in terms of skill, but not wages, to jobs held by large numbers of men, as in city or state governments, universities and some large corporations. Most successful attempts have occurred among workers represented by unions who work in public sector jobs.

Currently, most child care workers do not find themselves in such situations. Only 20,000 of the several hundred thousand child care workers in this country are represented by unions. Not only are the majority of child care centers relatively small (under 100 workers) but they usually are single-function enterprises. Thus, there is no other group of workers to whom comparisons can be made even if there are large numbers of staff. Although these workers can still benefit from comparable worth as an educational strategy, they cannot easily employ the specific job evaluation remedy used in other workplaces.

Some child care personnel, however, work in situations which more readily lend themselves to the comparable worth remedy. These include child care workers within school districts or universities or those who are employed by city or county governments. Staff working for large non-profit enterprises such as churches and social service agencies may be able to apply comparable worth. And, of course, child care staff in employer-supported child care programs could conceivably benefit, provided that the center is not legally separate from the sponsoring corporation.

Conclusion

Within limits, the movement for pay equity holds promise for the child care community. Certainly, all providers can utilize the general principle of comparable worth in educating parents, policy makers and the public about their plight. And some workers will be able to directly apply comparable worth as a remedy in their workplace.

Comparable worth provides a forum for those in the child care community to speak out against the historic disregard of those who care for children. By becoming involved with women's equity advocates, the child care community stands to receive special benefits. We can assist those grappling with child care policy as it relates to economic justice to avoid solutions that support one group of low income women -- working mothers -- by merely shifting the burden to another: child care providers. As a ray of hope or just an intriguing concept, comparable worth is an idea that must be examined closely by child care advocates so that no possible solution will be overlooked in our quest for wages commensurate with our true skills and responsibilities.

For a fuller discussion of comparable worth, see the CCEP resource Comparable Worth: Questions and Answers for Early Childhood Staff. The booklet contains information about successful attempts by child care advocates in using comparable worth both as a job evaluation technique and an educational strategy, as well as more information about the history and legal implications of comparable worth, comparable worth job evaluation studies and how they work, how to assess using a comparable worth strategy in your particular child care setting, and a list of resources and organizations.

WHO'S CARING FOR YOUR KIDS?
What Every Parent Should Know About Child Care Providers

How Working Conditions Affect Your Child

The people who care for your child while you're at work make the difference between good and poor quality care. Study after study has shown that the three biggest factors which make a high quality program are: the size of the group your child is in, the ratio of caregivers to children, and the training and consistency of the caregiver. In other words, your child is better off in a smaller group, with more teachers, with teachers who are trained, and with teachers who will stay with your child's program.

But the low pay which most child care workers earn isn't enough to keep many of the best teachers in the field, or to attract new providers. At least four out of every ten staff in child care centers leave their job every year. In family day care homes it's even more serious -- six in every ten providers leave each year. Many providers simply can't afford to continue working in child care. If you have ever had a provider leave, you know how hard this can be on you and your child.

And, because there is a shortage of child care teachers, these providers are often replaced by people with less training and experience. Sometimes jobs remain vacant for months.

High turnover, a shortage of trained teachers, and programs that are short staffed -- all are factors we know work against what is best for our children.

Myths and Facts About Child Care Workers

MYTH: People work in child care because they just love kids, or because they are women with time on their hands.

FACT: Child care providers are working to support themselves and their families.

MYTH: Child care workers are just naturally "good with kids."

FACT: The average child care workers has 14 years of school, with special training in the emotional, social, physical and educational needs of young children.

MYTH: Child care workers are satisfied with their working conditions.

FACT: Working conditions are often stressful. Many child care workers never get a break during their work day; many work even though they are ill, because they don't get sick leave or there aren't substitutes available.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the turnover rate among child care providers is more than 40% a year in centers, and about 60% a year for in-home care.

MYTH: I pay a lot for child care, so my child care provider must be getting a good salary.

FACT: Because the quality of care depends on having a high ratio of staff to children, salaries are the major item in a child care program's budget. Despite the high fees that many parents pay, and the high levels of education that most child care staff have, child care workers earn less than zookeepers, parking lot attendants, leaf rakers and amusement park attendants.

Fewer than one third of all child care staff receive health benefits.

Child care fees would be even higher if it weren't for the low salaries of providers.

What You Can Do

Find out about wages and working conditions in your child's program, then let other parents know what you have found.

Join with other parents and with providers to ensure that child care staff have:

- A salary scale with increases based on education and experience
- Annual cost of living increases
- Medical coverage, sick leave and vacations and child care benefits
- Written personnel policies, with grievance procedures
- Ongoing, in-service training

Talk with your child care providers about their concerns. Ask them how you can work together. Let them know you appreciate their work.

By joining with other parents and with providers to improve working conditions, you will ensure that your child has the best possible child care experience.

You may wonder how staff salaries and benefits can be improved while keeping your child care fees affordable -- whether you currently use publicly subsidized care or whether you pay full fee for your child's care. Clearly, the money to pay higher salaries and good benefits has to come from somewhere.

Child care services need the support of the community, of employers within the community, and of the state and federal governments so that your need for affordable services can be balanced with the needs of providers for fair and decent employment. By working together, parents and providers can build public support for child care.

Parents and providers need to:

- Learn about child care legislation and let your representatives know why quality, affordable child care is important to your family and to our future.
- Urge your employer or union to support child care programs and provide child care benefits.
- Work together for more public and private funds for child care.
- Work with the local media to expand their coverage of child care issues.

For copies of the CCEP brochure, "Who's Caring For Your Kids?", contact the Child Care Employee Project, P.O. Box 5603, Berkeley, CA 94705, (415) 653-9889.

CHILD CARE ADVOCATES' APTITUDE TEST

Are you ready to go out there and advocate for better child care? Ever wonder how to get people talking about the real child care issues? Try this ice-breaker at your next parent or staff meeting. This "test" is designed to be taken by any adult involved in child care -- students, teachers, parents -- as well as legislators, employers, friends and neighbors. It works best in a group setting where people will have the opportunity to discuss the answer with others. Sharpen your #2 pencil and begin . . .

1. How many pounds does the average child care worker lift in one day?
2. Which form of child care serves the most children in the U.S.?
3. When did the U.S. become most extensively involved in providing child care services for working mothers?
4. Who said, "Mothers and grandmothers have taken care of kids for thousands of years without training in early childhood education. Why is it that certain states prohibit anyone without this training from operating day care facilities?"
5. Name two major adult occupational health and safety hazards of child care.
6. Which child development expert would you include on a reading list about the positive effects of day care?

   a. Selma Fraiberg
   b. Alison Clarke-Stewart
   c. Burton White

7. What percentage of all child care workers will need to be replaced each year just to maintain the current supply of staff?

   a. 15% b. 19% c. 25% d. 42%

8. What percentage of child care workers in private household settings will need to be replaced each year just to maintain the current supply of providers?

   a. 15% b. 28% c. 45% d. 59%

9. 90% of private household child care workers and 58% of all other child care workers earn poverty-level wages. True or false?

10. Women have historically constituted 97% of all child care workers. True or false?

11. Although women earn less than men in most occupations, child care wages and benefits tend to be equitable between women and men. True or false?

12. Hourly earnings of workers in the service economy as a whole have increased at close to

    a. double b. triple

    the rate of workers in child care services during the past decade.

13. The 1987 median annual salary of full-time child care workers was:

    a. $18,400 b. $13,600 c. $11,100 d. $9,932

14. The single largest expense in all forms of child care services is:

    a. personnel costs
    b. teaching supplies
    c. liability insurance
    d. meals and snacks

15. Where would you expect to learn the most about the needs of child care providers?

    a. Time
    b. National Enquirer
    c. Child Care Employee News
    d. Mademoiselle

16. What do child care workers, dishwashers, peddlers and gas station attendants have in common?

17. Between 1977 and 1985, the number of licensed child care programs in the U.S. increased 72%, from 133,000 to 229,000. True or false?

18. Women who provide child care are paid, on average,

    a. more than
    b. less than

    parking lot attendants or people who take care of animals.

19. During President Reagan's administration, the amount of dollars made available to low-income parents through Title 20 funds increased. True or false?

20. The major form of child care subsidy in the U.S. assists:

    a. low-income parents
    b. middle-income parents

21. What percentage of its income can the average family afford to pay for child care services, according to the U.S. Office of the Budget?

22. What have researchers found to be the single most important determinant of quality of child care services?

23. Most women work outside the home for personal fulfillment or simply to earn pin money; therefore, most could afford to pay more for child care. True or false?

24. Women, and children under 12, constitute

    a. one-third b. one-half c. over 80%

    of the 33.7 million people living in poverty in the U.S.

25. Child care advocates in

    a. Massachusetts
    b. Mississippi
    c. Montana
    d. Milpitas

    recently secured several million dollars to raise salaries of child care center staff.

26. Despite their low wages, most child care workers receive comprehensive health and retirement benefits. True or false?

27. The major cause of high turnover among child care workers is the intense nature of working closely with young children. True or false?

ANSWERS

1. The average child care worker lifts 9600 lbs. a day. This calculation is based on the assumption that an average worker will lift eight 30-lb. children five times each hour, for eight hours. In addition to lifting, it is estimated that the average child care worker will stoop 200 times a day to child level.

2. Family day care

3. World War II

4. Ronald Reagan

5. There are many correct answers, including: back strain, exposure to infectious diseases, stress and toxic art or cleaning supplies.

6. (b) Alison Clarke-Stewart

7. (d) 42%

8. (d) 59%

9. True.

10. True.

11. False. Even in this female-dominated occupation, women earn only 50 to 70% of what men with the same level of education and hours of work earn.

12. (b) triple

13. (d) $9,932

14. (a) personnel costs

15. (c) Child Care Employee News

16. These occupations fall within the top ten in the U.S. with the highest turnover.

17. True.

18. (b) Child care providers earn less than those working in other occupations despite their higher level of education. 29% of women child care workers have had 16 or more years of education; only 14% of all women workers have had that much education.

19. False. Publicly supported child care funds were cut back during the Reagan years.

20. (b) The child care tax credit serves mainly middle-income working families.

21. 10%. Many families, of course, pay more than that.

22. That the provider have child-related training.

23. False. Most women work because of economic need. Nearly two-thirds of all women in the civilian labor force as of March 1984 were either single, divorced, widowed or separated, or had husbands whose 1983 income was less than $15,000.

24. (c) over 80%

25. (a) From 1986-88, workers in Massachusetts received close to $20 million in wage upgrading funds. In 1988 New York workers received $12 million.

26. False. Health benefits are provided to at most one-half of all child care providers, and no more than 20% are participating in a retirement plan.

27. False. The nature of the work -- close contact with children -- is what drew most people to the field, and is what they cite as the greatest source of satisfaction. Poor pay and low status fuel turnover.

RATE YOURSELF AS AN INFORMED CHILD CARE ADVOCATE

20 or more correct answers: You are ready to be a leader in a child care advocates' organization, and to face just about anyone.

15 to 20 correct answers: You are a child care advocate skilled in dealing with most situations.

Less than 15 correct answers: It's time to join the Child Care Employee Project right away!

* * *

WORKING FOR QUALITY CHILD CARE

An Early Childhood Education Text
from the Child Care Employee Project

UNIT II: CREATING A BETTER WORK ENVIRONMENT

The Child Care Employee Project
P.O. Box 5603
Berkeley, CA 94705
415/653-9889

PS 018106

WORKING FOR QUALITY CHILD CARE

An Early Childhood Education Text
from the Child Care Employee Project

UNIT II: CREATING A BETTER WORK ENVIRONMENT

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WORKING FOR QUALITY CHILD CARE

Unit II: Creating a Better Work Environment

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UNIT II: CREATING A BETTER WORK ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

The Child Care Employee Project (CCEP) is a non-profit advocacy organization which has worked since 1977 to improve the wages, status and working conditions of the child care profession. Thousands of child care workers, administrators and parents -- as well as government agencies, policy makers, employers and unions -- have come to CCEP for help on local and national issues affecting the child care workforce.

This text has grown out of a series of popular "handouts" which CCEP developed over the years in response to teachers' requests for practical, on-the-job help.

Unit I, "Teaching in Child Care Today," provides an overview of current issues facing the child care workforce, and highlights some successful strategies for change.

Unit II, "Creating a Better Work Environment," covers federal and California labor laws affecting child care workers, tips for building better relationships with co-workers and parents, and health and safety issues in child care.

The Child Care Employee Project can be reached at P.O. Box 5603, Berkeley, CA 94705, (415) 653-9889.

A. Employee Rights on the Job

FEDERAL AND STATE LABOR LAWS

Employees of child care programs are entitled to the same legal rights as most other workers. Both federal and state laws protect employees with respect to minimum wage, overtime pay, as well as a variety of working conditions. When an area is covered by both federal and state law, you get the benefit of whichever offers the highest level of protection. (On almost all points, California law is better.) If you have a specific question about your own situation at work, you should contact the state or federal agency responsible for enforcing the laws, your union if you have one, or a lawyer. You are also welcome to call the Child Care Employee Project (415 653-9889) for information and referrals.

FEDERAL LAW: THE FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT

The federal law which provides for minimum wage and overtime pay is called the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). The Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor is responsible for enforcing the FLSA. To locate the nearest office of the Wage and Hour Division, check the U.S. Government listings in the phone book under Labor Department. You can also write to the national office for information: Administrator of Wage and Hour Division, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C. 20210.

Who is covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act?

Any employee who is "engaged in interstate commerce," except for the exemptions listed below, is covered. The interstate commerce law is so broad that almost every employee of a child care center will be covered. If, on the job, an employee handles any goods that came from another state, such as toys, food or paper, then he or she meets the requirement. It doesn't matter whether the employer is a non-profit or for-profit organization.

The FLSA, however, does not cover the following groups:

A) Employees who are members of the immediate family of the employer.

B) People directly employed by a state, county, city or school district, who are instead covered by civil service regulations and education codes. If your center merely receives funding from one of these entities, you are only indirectly employed by them, and are therefore covered by the FLSA. Contact your personnel officer, employee association or union if you are unsure as to how you are covered.

C) Babysitters employed on an occasional basis.

D) Executive, administrative or professional employees. Deciding which employees fall into these categories can be complicated under federal regulations, but it is the job duties, rather than the job title, which are decisive. Here are some guidelines:

Executive. Must direct at least two other (full-time equivalent) employees. Has authority to hire and fire, and spends at least 80% of time in executive capacity.

Administrative. Duties must call for exercise of discretion and independent judgment. Does specialized work under only general supervision, and spends 80% of time in administrative capacity.

Professional. Primary duties require a prolonged course of specialized study and exercise of discretion. Child care center teachers usually are not included under this definition.

NOTE: Exemption to the FLSA does not apply to executive, administrative or professional employees who are paid on an hourly basis. If you have other questions about whether you have been properly classified as executive, administrative or professional under federal law, contact the nearest office of the Wage and Hour Division.

STATE LAW

Besides the federal government, most states also have wage and hour laws to protect workers. Sometimes the state law sets even higher standards than the federal law. To find out whether you are covered by state law or to see that such a law is enforced, contact the appropriate agency in your state. To locate your state agency, call the information number for your state government and ask who enforces minimum wage, overtime and other labor laws.

The California wage and hour law which applies to child care employees is called Wage Order 5-80. It covers regulations for overtime, minimum wage and breaks, and is enforced by the California Labor Commissioner, which can provide you with a free copy of the law. To locate the nearest office of the Labor Commissioner, look in the government listings of the telephone book under State of California, Industrial Relations Department. The Labor Commissioner (also sometimes called Labor Standards Enforcement) is listed among the divisions of the Industrial Relations Department.

Who is covered by the California wage and hour laws?

Wage Order 5-80 covers all employees in child care programs except for the following groups:

A) People employed directly by the state, or by any county, city or school district. If your center merely receives funding from one of these entities, you are covered by 5-80.

B) Caregivers with 24-hour responsibility for supervising children.

C) Employees covered by a union contract which creates valid overtime pay exemptions.

D) Executive, administrative or professional employees. Again, deciding which employees fall into these categories can be complicated. California and federal standards differ slightly, but with each it is the job duties, rather than the job title, which are decisive. This exemption is often significant in determining who is entitled to overtime pay.

An employee may be considered executive, administrative or professional if he or she is engaged in work which is primarily (i.e. more than 50%) intellectual, managerial or creative, which requires exercise of discretion and independent judgment, where they are responsible for supervising at least 2 employees and which pays at least $900 per month. In general, this includes certified teachers, accountants and center directors. It does not include teacher's aides, nurses, social workers, secretaries and bookkeepers. A person who earns less than $900 per month is also not included, regardless of job responsibilities; nor are those who are paid on an hourly basis.

Under both the FLSA and California Wage Order 5-80, professionals include teachers who have a bachelor's degree and a state teaching certificate. Anyone called a teacher, but who does not have both a bachelor's and a certificate, does not fall into the professional category. In California, a "children's center instructional permit" is not considered a teaching certificate; on the other hand, someone with a "children's center supervisory permit," which requires a bachelor's degree, does fall into the professional category.

If you have other questions about whether you have been properly classified as executive, administrative or professional under California law, contact the nearest California Labor Commissioner's office for clarification.

PAID WORK TIME

All non-exempt employees are entitled to be paid for all hours they work, even when the work is done outside regular working hours or away from the work site, including:

- all time during which employees are required to be on their employer's premises;
- rest periods (breaks) allowed by law;
- preparatory and concluding activities (for instance, setting up or putting away equipment) if the activity is integral to the work or if it is an established practice;
- unauthorized overtime work, if your employer knew or had reason to know you were still working;
- meetings, lectures and training, unless attendance is voluntary;
- any required additional hours, such as staff meetings, parent meetings, fundraising activities, non-teaching "work days," parent conferences, or time spent orienting or training oneself, parents, children, or new employees;
- travel time during the work day, if job-related;
- time spent adjusting employee grievances (including one's own), unless your union contract says otherwise;
- time spent writing reports or finishing required paperwork, such as child or staff assessments, petty cash accounts, lesson plans, newsletters, etc.

Employees must also be paid if they report for work for their regular shift and are given less than half their regular number of hours. Even if they are given no work at all, they must be paid for at least two hours or at least half their regular number of hours, whichever is greater. If employees are asked to report to work when it is not their regular shift, they must be paid for at least two hours, even if they are given no work at all.

NOTE: If working any of the above hours causes you to work overtime, you are entitled to overtime pay.

Questions and Answers About Paid Work Time

Q: I ask my teachers to stay on-site during their lunch breaks to maintain legal ratios in case of an emergency, but they don't have to stay in their classrooms or eat with the kids. Do I have to pay them for this time?

A: Yes. Any time an employee is not free to leave the premises and do as they like they are legally "on duty," and must be paid at their regular rate of pay.

Q: The contract I signed says that attendance at weekly staff meetings and monthly parent meetings, without extra pay, is expected. Do I have to go if I'm not paid for my time?

A: Your employer cannot ask you to sign away your rights. Even though you signed a contract agreeing not to be paid for these meetings, you must be paid for your time if you are required to go.

Q: My supervisor wants me to schedule teacher assessment conferences with each of our teachers during their lunch breaks. The supervisor is going to take them each to lunch (she's paying) during the conferences. Should they get paid for this time as well?

A: Yes. Any time employees are "under control" of their employer (not free to do as they like), they must be paid for that time. The employee must also agree in writing to an on-duty meal time.

Q: My employer always has one or two errands for me to run for the center on my way to work, during lunch, on my way home, or on the weekend. It seems like I ought to get paid to do center errands on my own time.

A: Any time you are required to do such an errand -- i.e., you are not free to do as you like -- you are "on duty" and must be paid for your time.

Q: If I come to work and the children's attendance is low enough that the center can meet the legal ratios without me, I'm sent home without pay. If enough children are sent home sick, I'm also sent home, even if it's in the middle of my shift. Are they allowed to do this?

A: No. You must be paid, even if you are sent home.

Q: Our center can't afford to pay the staff extra time to prepare curriculum material and plan activities, so teachers end up doing it on their breaks, lunch hours, for a few minutes before or after their shifts, and/or at home. I discourage them from doing this, because I know they need their breaks to rest and recharge. On the other hand, the work does need to get done somehow for us to maintain a quality program. What can we do?

A: Quality costs money. If you require your employees to do this preparation work, they are entitled to be paid for the time they spend working.

MINIMUM WAGE

All employees, whether full or part time, hourly or salaried, temporary or permanent, must be paid at least the minimum wage. The federal government and all states set a minimum wage. When state and federal rates differ, as they do in California, employees are entitled to the higher of the two. Some employers are required to pay a higher minimum wage. Such cases include employers receiving state or federal funds, and those operating long-term care facilities.

Questions and Answers About the Minimum Wage Law

Q: Should I be paying my teachers the minimum wage for their lunch breaks?

A: Minimum wage laws do not apply to meal periods if the period is at least 30 minutes long and employees are free to leave the premises and do as they like.

Q: When I do babysitting for my director at her home, she pays me less than the minimum wage. Is this legal?

A: Yes. Babysitters caring for children in the child's own home can legally be paid less than the minimum wage. If you do a substantial amount of non-babysitting work at the same time, however, such as gardening or housework, you are covered by the minimum wage law.

OVERTIME PAY

Most child care workers are covered by federal and/or state laws governing overtime. When both apply, employees are entitled to the better coverage of the two. By federal law, all non-exempt employees must be paid a premium of 1 times their "regular rate of pay" for all time worked over 40 hours in a week.

For example, if the regular rate of pay is $5.00, and an employee worked 42 hours in a week, s/he should receive an additional $15.00 for the 2 hours of overtime worked. In some cases the overtime premium is more than "time and a half." In California, for example, employees are entitled to the following overtime premium rates:

- over 8 hours work per day and/or 40 hours work per week: time and a half

- over 12 hours work per day: double time

- over 6 days per week: time and a half for the first 8 hours of the 7th day, and double time for all additional hours of the 7th day. (NOTE: If an employee hasn't worked more than 30 hours in the week, and has not worked more than 6 hours in any day, these 7th day rules do not apply. Employees who are directly responsible for children in 24-hour programs must receive at least time and a half for all hours worked on the seventh day, but double time is not mandatory.)

Overtime is based on a 7-day work week. An employer cannot, for instance, average an employee's hours over two weeks to figure overtime hours.

Flex-time

Many states have changed overtime rules to accommodate the growing demand for more flexibility in working hours. In some instances, employers and employees in some states can legally institute "flex-time" schedules in which employees agree to work, for example, a 10-hour shift four days a week, instead of the standard 8-hour shift 5 days a week.

California is currently reviewing its overtime rules, particularly the current regulation that requires employers to pay premium pay for any time worked over 8 hours in a day. In some cases, flex-time scheduling may be agreed upon already in California. Special overtime rules apply in these instances.

You can consult your union, the state Labor Commissioner or the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division for further information.

Questions and Answers About Overtime Pay

Q: What is the California 'Split Shift Premium,' and am I eligible?

A: California Wage Order 5-80 requires an extra amount of pay for those whose work schedule is interrupted by an unpaid period other than a meal period. The rationale is that such a schedule is inconvenient, and makes it nearly impossible to pursue other activities or find other work. Among child care workers, split shifts are most common in school-age programs, in which the same worker might provide child care both before and after school -- for example, 7-9 a.m. and 2-6 p.m.

While the split shift premium is a nice notion, it applies only to those who earn close to the minimum wage, and in any case is a very small amount. Officially, your employer owes you one extra hour's pay at the minimum wage (as of 1988,

$4.25 per hour in California) for each day that you work a split shift. However, any amount of your hourly pay over and above the minimum wage multiplied by the number of hours you work in a day is credited toward the extra hour's pay which your employer owes you.

Thus, for example, if you earn $4.40 an hour on a split shift totaling six hours, your employer is credited 6 x .15, or 90 cents, and thus owes you $3.25 per work day. If you earn $5.00 an hour on a six-hour split shift, your employer is credited 6 x .75, or $4.50, and owes you nothing.

But split shift jobs are hard to fill. Employers who want to retain skilled, qualified workers should consider it a worthwhile investment to offer some extra pay for split shifts, even if it is not required by law.

Q: If I work on a legal holiday, what overtime am I supposed to receive?

A: Any day is a paid holiday only if your employer has made an agreement to that effect; paid holidays are "benefits," not required by law. If you are asked to work that day once such an agreement has been made, however, you are entitled to your regular rate of pay times the number of hours worked in addition to one regular day's wages, since you have already "earned" the pay for that day, by agreement.

Regular overtime rules apply to overtime hours accrued over holidays. Employers often offer additional incentives for working on holidays, such as paying double time, but this is not legally required unless agreed upon in advance.

Q: My director has offered to pay us at half our regular rate for attendance at staff in-service training sessions offered in the evenings after work. I already work 40 hours a week. Shouldn't I get overtime, rather than less money for going?

A: Once your wages are determined (by verbal or written agreement, law, union contract, etc.), it is illegal for your employer to pay you less than the amount agreed upon. If your attendance at the sessions is voluntary, however, your director can legally offer you such an incentive or bonus for attending. If your attendance is required, you should receive overtime pay.

Q: My employer has asked me to come in on Saturdays; I normally work Monday through Friday. I said I'd rather not, and she said I didn't have any choice. Then I found out I'm not even getting paid overtime for coming in on the weekend! Can she get away with this?

A: "Weekend" days (Saturday and Sunday) have no special status with respect to overtime rules; the regular rules apply. Your employer can require you to work six days in a row. Usually, you cannot be required to work more than six out of seven straight days, and when you do, the rules about a seventh day of work apply (see above).

Your employer can, however, require you to work a seventh day under any of the following conditions:

- you do not work a total of more than 30 hours per week;
- you do not work a total of more than 6 hours in any one day;
- you are a public employee (in most instances);
- your union contract allows it;
- there is a genuine job-related emergency.

Q: How many hours overtime does an employee have to work, when asked to?

A: Unless there is a specific agreement limiting the amount of overtime an employee will have to accept, an employer may require employees to work "around the clock" (as long as at least the legally required breaks and meal periods are offered and as long as they are willing to pay the overtime accrued) up to six 24-hour days. After that, the seventh-day-of-work rules apply.

Q: I was sick for two weeks and used up all my sick leave. My director said I could earn it back by working overtime hours without pay. Is this O.K.?

A: Agreeing to work overtime in exchange for time off (rather than for overtime pay) is called working "comp time," and there are special rules to cover it. (See "Compensatory Time.")

COMPENSATORY TIME ("COMP TIME")

Under specific conditions, federal and California law allows employers to offer employees the choice of taking paid time off instead of overtime pay to compensate them for working overtime.

Federal law places these restrictions on the use of comp time:

- the employee must request comp time in lieu of overtime payment in cash;
- if the employee is represented by a union, the union must agree to allow this option;

- the time off accrues at the overtime premium rate applicable (e.g. one hour worked overtime earns one and one-half hours time off, etc.);
- any overtime worked over a maximum of 240 hours must be paid in cash;
- the time off must be granted reasonably soon after the employee asks for it.

California state law places these additional restrictions on the use of comp time:

- the time off is provided in the same pay period in which it is earned;
- careful records of overtime earned and comp time taken must be kept.

Questions and Answers About Comp Time

Q: Our budget can't handle any overtime payments in cash, so when my employees have to work a little late, I let them save up the time to take off later. Everyone seems satisfied with this arrangement.

A: Whenever employees work overtime, they are entitled to overtime payment in cash. They may choose to accept comp time instead of cash if they wish, but the choice must be theirs. Remember, also, that overtime earned must be paid at overtime rates. For example, if your employees work 30 minutes overtime, they "save up" 45 minutes to take off later.

Q: My employer says I've only earned 30 hours of comp time. I know I've worked 40 extra hours. How can we settle this?

A: In California, your employer is required to keep accurate records of overtime accrued and comp time granted. It is a good idea for all employers and employees to keep careful daily records of time worked and taken off, to reduce chances for misunderstanding and disagreement later. Ideally, you and your employer should agree in writing about overtime hours to be worked and taken as comp time in advance, but your employer must pay you for all hours s/he allows you to work, even if s/he doesn't ask or want you to work those hours.

How to Calculate the "Regular Rate of Pay" for Determining Overtime Pay

If employees are paid an hourly wage, their regular rate is their hourly wage. For overtime pay, they would receive 1 times their hourly wage. If they are paid on a salary basis for a specified number of hours each week, the regular rate is obtained by dividing their weekly salary by the specified hours. If a salary is paid as straight time pay for whatever number of hours is worked in a work week, the regular rate is obtained by dividing the salary by the total hours worked each week. In this case the regular rate may actually vary from week to week.

The regular rate of pay does not include pay for unworked time (vacation pay, sick pay, personal leave days, etc.), employer contributions to pension or health insurance plans, or bonuses in the nature of a gift.

WAGE DEDUCTIONS

Employers may lawfully deduct money from employee wages for the following reasons only:

- legally required federal taxes, state taxes, social security and state disability insurance (SDI);
- court-ordered child or family support payments;
- payments for back taxes the employee owes the government;
- payments the employee has asked the employer to make for union dues, assessments or initiation fees, to bank deposits and credit unions;
- contributions the employee has asked the employer to make to charities, retirement plans, fringe-benefit plans, medical or other insurance plans;
- legal, employee-requested wage assignments (check with your Labor Commissioner for further information about such assignments);
- lateness (employers do not have to pay for time not worked, regardless of the reason for lateness; if the time lost is less than 30 minutes, the employer can deduct a full 30 minutes of pay);

- absences, even if caused by sickness or disability (assuming the absence is not covered by benefit agreements);
- infractions of safety rules enacted to prevent serious injury to other employees;
- breakage of equipment caused by a willful or grossly negligent act of the employee.

REIMBURSEMENT

If employees must spend their own money or use their personal property in order to carry out their job duties, they are entitled to reimbursement. Whether or not the expenditure or use of personal property was necessary to the performance of the job determines whether or not the reimbursement must be made. For example, if part of an employee's job is to warm bottles for children and s/he couldn't do so without purchasing a hot plate for heating water, such an expenditure would be considered necessary and s/he must be reimbursed.

BREAKS AND MEAL PERIODS

There is no federal law entitling employees to paid breaks from work. In some states, breaks are not required by law, and in others, employers need not provide breaks to part-time workers. This often excludes child care staff who work in five- or six-hour shifts.

In California, workers are entitled to a 10-minute paid rest break for every four hours they work. The break must be taken as close to the middle of the four-hour period as possible. California employees are also entitled to a 30-minute unpaid meal period when they work 6 hours or more in a shift. When employers require that any job duties be carried out during this meal period, or that an employee remain on the premises to handle emergencies, they must pay the employee at the usual rate for the entire meal period. The employee must agree in writing to an "on-duty" meal period. If the employee's shift is not more than six hours total, the employer and employee may agree to waive the employee's right to a meal period.

Questions and Answers About Breaks and Meal Periods

Q: Can I sometimes add my lunch break and coffee break together and leave early instead of taking them?

A: By law, your rest breaks should occur as nearly as possible to the middle of your shift. You may agree to waive your lunch break if you don't work more than six hours total. In this case you would be due pay at your regular rate for the meal period worked. You and your employer may interpret this as "going home early" if you wish.

Q: I work a split shift. What breaks and meal times am I entitled to?

A: If you are required to take an unpaid break, other than the rest breaks and lunch periods to which you are legally entitled, you are working a split shift. Each part of the shift is treated independently. The breaks and meal periods you are entitled to in each part depends on the length of time you work in each. The rules governing regular work shifts apply.

Q: Not only do I have to eat lunch with the kids, my boss takes the cost of the meals out of my paycheck. Frankly, I'm not that crazy about what the kids are fed in the first place, and I rarely eat any of it. Is this legal?

A: An employer can deduct the cost of such meals from an employee's wage only under a voluntary written agreement from the employee (which the employee can cancel at any time) or by union rules. Even then, there are very specific rules regulating not only the amount that can be charged for the meals, but their nutritional content as well. Employees may not usually be charged for meals not eaten. You may bring your own lunch to eat with the children.

Q: The only time we get a break or can eat our lunch is during the kid's nap time. Somehow, eating lunch in the nap room doesn't seem like much of a break.

A: A break is not a legal break if you have any job duties to do during even part of it. If meals must be eaten while having to perform any job duties (even if the duties don't take up the whole period), including simply being "on-site" and available to maintain the required legal ratios in the event of an emergency, the whole meal period must be a paid one.

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK

Under the federal Equal Pay Act, an employer may not pay one employee less than another simply on the basis of an employee's sex. For the work to be considered equal, all of these conditions must apply:

- the work to be done in the job is approximately equal;
- the work requires approximately the same effort, training, experience and education;

- the work has approximately the same degree of responsibility;
- the work requires approximately the same intellectual or physical effort;
- the work is to be done under approximately the same working conditions.

Even though the child care industry employs mostly female workers, women in this field earn only 50% to 78% on average of what men with comparable training and experience earn. If you feel you are not receiving equal pay for equal work, contact your Labor Commissioner or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for further information.

RECORDS OF WORKING HOURS

Employers must keep records for each employee which state:

- full name;
- Social Security number;
- home address;
- sex and occupation;
- hours: regular time of day and when work week begins;
- total additions to or deductions from wages for each pay period;
- date of pay and the pay period covered by payment.

These records must be kept on file for three years. California law permits employees to inspect personnel records used to determine the employee's qualifications for employment, promotion, raises, termination or discipline. These records must either be kept at the work place or made available there within a reasonable time.

NOTE: This does not apply to records relating to any investigation of a possible criminal offense, nor to letters of reference.

ENFORCEMENT OF EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) is enforced by the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor. Employees may file a claim with their local Department of Labor office if they think they are being denied proper overtime pay or other rights guaranteed by the FLSA. This agency will investigate and make a decision on the claim and has the power to enforce its decision. If either the employee or the employer disputes the agency decision, either may appeal to get an informal hearing on the case.

Employees may also file claims with the agency in their state which enforces state wage and hour laws. California wage and hour laws are enforced by the California Labor Commissioner, which has investigatory and enforcement powers. Again, decisions may be appealed. In California, it may be preferable to file claims with the Labor Commissioner rather than with the federal agency, because California law often offers higher levels of protection.

Another federal agency, the National Labor Relations Board, also protects the rights of employees to take action together regarding their working conditions -- including, but not limited to, forming or joining a union. It is illegal to fire employees for such activity, and workers so fired can file a claim with the Board, or a lawsuit in civil court, for wrongful termination.

WHISTLEBLOWING:
Reporting Violations of the Law

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects everyone's right to report suspected violations of the law. Most state constitutions provide similar protection. The term often used to describe the reporting of possible violations of state or federal law is "whistleblowing." It is illegal for employers to try to prevent employees from whistleblowing or to retaliate against them for doing so. Employers may not fire, demote, suspend, or discriminate against employees for reporting violations of the law. They also may not threaten employees with any of these actions for whistleblowing. Employers may not retaliate against employees who refuse to perform work in violation of the law after notifying the employer of the violation.

In general, if a situation seems to endanger anyone's health, safety, or well-being, or if it seems that an individual is being discriminated against, there is probably a law or regulation that addresses the problem. In California, all licensed child care facilities are required by law to make their copy of current licensing regulations available to employees and parents. They are also required to post information identifying the licensing agency, how licensing regulations can be obtained, and local telephone numbers where complaints may be made.

With the exception of child abuse, California does not require employees to report violations of licensing or other laws in child care programs. However, anyone may report such violations. Employees who show no hesitation in alerting directors and owners to violations in centers provide significant assistance in maintaining legal and professional standards. Center staff are often the only witnesses to violations of a law. If the center administration is unresponsive to staff concerns about suspected violations, in many cases the only method for curing the problem is to report the violation. Child care providers currently seek improved working conditions and professional recognition. Self-regulation, which is encouraged by the "whistleblowing law" protection, should have a positive impact on public perception of the child care field.

Everyone has the right to report cases of abuse (or suspected abuse) of themselves or others. In California, employees in child day care centers are mandated reporters of child abuse. This means they are required, by law, to make a report if they know or have a reasonable suspicion that a child is being or has been abused. It is important to report past abuse because the child or the child's siblings may still be in danger of abuse. Under the definition of the law, a "child" is anyone under the age of 18, and "child abuse" is defined as any non-accidental physical injury, sexual assault, cruelty, unreasonable punishment, or neglect, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, or health care. "Reasonable" suspicion means that most people with experience and expertise similar to that of the reporter would probably suspect abuse if they had the same evidence.

The better informed caregivers are about child abuse and its causes, the more likely they will be not only to recognize and report it when it occurs, but to be aware of the symptoms of children and families at risk, and to be able to help them get needed support services before abuse occurs. If you live in a state other than California, check with your state child protection agency about your state's child abuse reporting law.

Questions and Answers About Reporting Violations of the Law

Q: I feel the climbing structure in the play yard is developmentally inappropriate for the toddlers in our program. I really think it's dangerous for them to play on it. My director says we don't have any other place for them to play outside, and that if the toddlers are carefully supervised, she doesn't think it's dangerous. She says it looks bad to the parents when I try to prevent the toddlers from climbing on the structure and that I must simply supervise them more carefully. What can I do?

A: You may refuse to supervise the toddlers in situations where you believe there is a violation of law or regulation if you notify the director of the violation, meanwhile preventing the children from playing until the situation is corrected. It may take a third party to help solve the dispute about whether or not the situation is dangerous.

Q: The child/staff ratios at our center are routinely out of compliance with licensing regulations. None of us ever takes a break because one person simply can't handle the overload of kids. Our center director complained to the owner about this on several occasions, and now we've been told she 'resigned.' The new director says we just have to do the best we can or we can 'leave like the old director.' What can we do?

A: Since you have complained to the center director and the owner is aware of the problem, your only recourse is to report to the Department of Social Services. If your old director was fired for threatening to "blow the whistle" on the situation, the action was illegal. Employers are prohibited from retaliating against any employee who makes a good faith complaint of violations to the responsible agency, or to the employer or her representative.

For more information about California's whistleblowing law, see the Child Care Employee Project booklet, "Reporting Licensing and Other Violations in California Child Care Programs: An Employee's Right."

WORKERS' COMPENSATION BENEFITS

Workers' compensation for an illness or injury resulting from one's job is required by law in all states. The following information refers specifically to California law; if you live in another state, contact the local workers' compensation office to find out the legal provisions which affect you.

What is workers' compensation?

It is a program established by state law which provides, at the employer's expense, benefits for workers who have become injured or ill from or in the course of their employment. Any employee ill or injured on the job is automatically entitled to benefits, regardless of negligence or fault. In return, the employee gives up the right to sue the employer for damages due to the injury or illness. In certain instances a third party (such as a manufacturer of equipment) may be sued by the employee.

Who is eligible?

An employee with any type of work-related injury or illness, from back strain to chicken pox, can apply for benefits. In California, workers whose employers are covered by insurance, those whose employers are self-insured, and even those whose employers are not insured, are eligible. A special fund administered by the Department of Industrial Relations supplies benefits to the latter group. While it is often difficult medically to prove a connection between work and injury or illness, you will lose nothing by applying for benefits.

How do I apply?

If you believe you have suffered a job-related accident or illness, you should:

- report it to your supervisor, who must then file a report with the insurance carrier;
- see a doctor and make sure that s/he files a report to the workers' comp insurance carrier or your self-insured employer;

- consider consulting a workers' comp certified attorney in order to make certain you receive the benefits to which you are entitled; consultation is free.

You have one year from the date of the injury/illness to initiate proceedings, but it is a good idea to begin as soon as possible.

What doctor do I choose?

You may see the physician of your choice. Technically, to exercise this right, you must advise your employer of your doctor's name in writing prior to your injury/illness. It is unlikely that your employer will interfere with your right to choose. However, your employer does have the right to request that you be seen by a physician of his/her choice at his/her expense.

In selecting a physician, it is important to realize that many M.D.'s are not familiar with occupational medicine, nor with the hazards involved in working with young children. Therefore, it might be advisable to go to a clinic or a physician with expertise in occupational medicine. Some health plans employ doctors trained in occupational medicine. If you are not satisfied with your doctor, you may change, provided you give a good reason. If you do so, you will need to inform your self-insured employer or the insurance carrier.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, San Francisco General Hospital Workers' Clinic (821-5391) and Kaiser - San Francisco Workers' Clinic (929-4996) have physicians trained in occupational medicine. Committees on safety and health (COSH) exist around the country, and can provide referrals to practitioners trained in occupational medicine. For more information, contact the Labor and Occupational Health Program: University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720, (415) 642-5507.

What benefits will I receive?

1. Medical care and treatment. Physician services, hospitalization, physical therapy and restoration (including devices deemed medically necessary, such as special chairs, braces, etc.), prescriptions, X-rays, lab studies, and all other "necessary and reasonable care" ordered by your physician. "Physician" is broadly defined to include physicians, surgeons, psychologists, optometrists, dentists, podiatrists, osteopaths, chiropractors and acupuncturists. All medical fees are paid directly by the insurance carrier.

2. Temporary disability. If your doctor confirms that you cannot work because of your injury or illness, you are eligible for disability benefits. Payments generally begin the fourth full day off work, and continue until your doctor releases you to return to work or decides your condition has reached the point of maximum improvement. The weekly rate for temporary disability payments in California is based on two thirds of your gross weekly wages. If you return to part time or modified work by order

of your physician, and receive less than your usual earnings, you may be eligible for temporary partial disability.

3. Permanent disability benefits. Once your physician determines that your condition is "permanent and stationary," with further change unlikely, your employer or insurance carrier will request an evaluation. The Disability Evaluation Bureau of the California State Division of Industrial Accidents will determine the extent of your permanent disability, and will generally offer to pay you a weekly benefit amount.

4. Vocational rehabilitation. California has generous benefits for rehabilitation. If your physician diagnoses you as a "qualified injured worker," that is, unable to return to your job, and/or your injury/illness keeps you away from work six months or more, your employer is legally required to refer you for rehabilitation. Under the California program, a rehabilitation counselor develops a plan for you to receive training in a job you will be able to perform, and your employer must finance this training, as well as pay you temporary disability until you have completed the training.

5. Other benefits: transportation, tolls and parking for medical care appointments.

What if I don't receive the benefits I feel I am entitled to?

1. In California, you may contact an "information and assistance officer" of the Division of Industrial Accidents.

2. You may request a hearing before a workers' compensation judge. Because the system can be complicated it is a good idea to be represented by an attorney at the hearing. Your needs will be best served by a certified compensation attorney. The lawyer's fee, usually a percentage of settlement (approximately 9 to 15%), is set by the judge. For referrals to workers' compensation attorneys, contact the Child Care Law Center (22 Second St., Fifth Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105, 415 495-5498), the Lawyers Reference Service (listed in local Yellow Pages); or your local Bar Association.

For basic information on benefits and rehabilitation, contact your local Workers' Compensation office. In California, contact the State Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Industrial Accidents. There are 14 district offices from San Diego to Eureka, each of which has an information and assistance officer and a rehabilitation consultant.

UNIONS

As child care employees experience the frustration of fighting individually for improved wages and working conditions, questions often emerge about unions. Will a union enable me to join with others to create a stronger voice and to take direct action to bring worker issues into the public arena? How do I go about joining a union? What effect will a union have on our center?

The major motivation for workers to organize into a union is to gain the right to bargain with their employer on the conditions of their employment. The conditions of employment most frequently associated with union contracts are wages, benefits and hours. Yet union contracts cover many other issues which greatly affect child care workers: personnel policies, grievance and hiring procedures, evaluations and promotion systems, provisions for in-service training, teacher/child ratios, breaks and input into center decision-making.

These non-salary benefits are frequently as important to the job satisfaction of unionized child care workers as the salary benefits. They can also be critical in helping workers to provide better services. For example, when a union contract ensures manageable teacher/child ratios and adequate time for breaks and classroom preparation, the quality of care in a center is certain to be improved.

Innovative Contract Provisions

Input into center decision-making can be an important guarantee in a contract. For example, members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 299 in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, negotiated a provision in their contract that guarantees their employer will meet with them at least once each month to evaluate concerns that affect the quality of care in the center. Members of District 65, United Auto Workers (UAW), in a Massachusetts child care center have a contract that guarantees that staff will comprise at least 33% of the board and be included in a curriculum committee composed of staff, parents and the director.

Improved job security is another benefit sometimes covered in union contracts. Headstart workers in San Francisco, affiliated with District 65, UAW, were able to negotiate lay-off and recall rights as part of their contract. Because these workers are laid off every summer, these rights are critical to their long-term employment.

Innovative contract provisions at other centers include a staff room "for the use and enjoyment of employees," time off for conferences and training, and reimbursement for the cost of clothes cleaning and shampoo during an outbreak of head lice in a center.

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Working with Parents and Directors

Workers considering unionization are often concerned that conflict will be created within their center and that parent fees will be raised to cover wage increases when they unionize. While these fears are not unfounded, most unions that have experience with the child care workforce understand that parents and center directors are not the enemy. In the words of a District 65 organizer in Boston, "We realize that as long as we are dependent on parent fees and dwindling governmental monies, it will be difficult to get wages, benefits and working conditions up to the level they should be." Many workers recognize the union as a long-range political ally that assists child care workers in effectively advocating for better funding and expanded services. The strength and unity of a union can be used to influence the government agencies that control funding of child care.

The strength of this alliance has been most effectively demonstrated over the past several years by District 65 of the UAW and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). These two unions have been in the forefront of advocacy for public policy supporting expanded funding for child care services. District 65 played a key role in the coalition that successfully persuaded the Massachusetts legislature to allocate more than $9 million in 1985 and 1986 to upgrade the salaries of staff in state-funded child care centers and to provide expanded subsidies for parents. AFSCME, which represents employees in 350 centers in New York City, undertook a media campaign aimed at city residents to demonstrate that ultimately it would cost the city more to close 80 day care centers than to keep them open.

For workers who are employed in centers run by corporate child care chains, unions are quick to point out that these corporations are operating with large profit margins and thus there is money for staff wage increases without the necessity of raising parent fees. Indeed, when parents study the financial statements of these corporations they often become the strongest allies for increased wages, preferring their fees to be spent on staff salaries rather than shareholder profits.

Directors can also be the beneficiaries of unionization. Although directors may initially feel isolated and threatened by a union organizing drive, as one center director points out, "Since our center unionized, people are staying on staff for a longer period of time. The improvement in working conditions and morale has clearly led to greater stability." Some directors also feel the union provides them with greater leverage in negotiations with boards and umbrella agencies.

Child Care Workers and Unions

As far as CCEP has been able to discover, the first child care union formed in 1949 in Southern California. Called the Nursery School Teachers Union, its members were teachers in parent cooperative nursery schools who were concerned about their low wages, lack of professional services, and the complicated relationship between parents and teachers in the co-op situation. In 1964, this 250+ strong union affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, changing its name shortly thereafter to the Early Childhood Federation. Today, Local 1475 (Early Childhood Federation -- AFT) continues to represent Headstart and other child care workers.

Over the past twenty years, many other attempts to organize child care workers have occurred. In 1978 members of Boston Area Day Care Workers United, a workers' support group, became members of District 65, UAW. This union now represents about 1,000 workers throughout the state of Massachusetts. District 65 also has organized child care programs in San Francisco and Wisconsin and is pioneering organizing drives among workers in corporate child care chains across the country.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) began working with New York City child care workers in 1969 and signed its first contract in 1971. Workers in a variety of centers -- both public sector and private non-profit -- in northern California are represented by locals of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). SEIU has also organized child care workers in other locations including Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, and Newark, New Jersey.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has represented child care center teachers since 1976 in Washington, D.C., and now represents aides in public school children's centers and Headstart programs in Oakland, Philadelphia and Chicago. Finally, Local 996 of the Teamsters in Honolulu represents about 75 workers in early childhood programs in Hawaii.

However, even with increased interest in unions, only a relatively small percentage of the child care workforce is unionized. From our estimates, the total number of unionized child care workers remains less than 20,000. The diverse and isolated nature of the child care delivery system coupled with an unusually high turnover rate among child care staff has worked against the development of successful organizing campaigns. Unions have had an especially difficult time since workers frequently leave a center (or the child care field) before the completion of an organizing drive.

District 65, UAW organizers in northern California report that they discuss with workers the importance of staying on the job and making a commitment to each other during the course of a campaign. They point out that these workers are real pioneers in the child care field; their battles for improved wages, status and working conditions will lay the foundation for decent workplaces and quality care for generations to come. It is this sense of dignity and importance that often helps to sustain the morale of workers through a long organizing campaign.

If you decide to join a union, you and your co-workers will need to grapple with many difficult issues. Perhaps the most important will be the recognition that joining a union is only the first step in effective organizing. Advocacy for more societal support for child care must be an ongoing commitment.

For more information on unions, refer to the Child Care Employee Project's booklet, "Unionizing: a Guide for Child Care Workers."

WORKING AS A SUBSTITUTE:
Your Rights and Responsibilities

Children cannot be left to care for themselves. Without substitutes, child care programs would come to a screeching halt. People who work with children are prone to frequent illnesses, creating an ongoing need for temporary child care personnel. Teachers need to take vacations too, and centers require subs for pre-arranged leave time as well as last-minute absences. Following are some tips we hope will make your experience as a sub a good one for you and the children you work with.

Deciding to Become a Sub

If you are interested in becoming a substitute, check your local newspaper for ads or contact your local child care referral agency or community college early childhood department to find out what orientation or training programs are available. If no such programs exist, you can contact child care centers listed in the yellow pages of the phone book to let them know you are interested in temporary work.

Most centers accept substitutes with little or no prior training or experience in early childhood education, but experienced subs are in greater demand. Moreover, beyond providing a needed service to child care programs, many people find that working as a sub is a good way to determine whether or not they want to pursue a career involving young children.

Once you have contacted the proper agency, you will learn what is required by law to work as a substitute teacher in your community (different regulations govern child care in each state). Most communities require a sub to get a TB screening test. Medical examinations, criminal record checks and fingerprinting are often also required by law to help insure children's health and safety. Since these can be costly, it is worth shopping around for the least expensive sources for these services. In some areas, there may be an agency with funds to subsidize your costs.

Many child care resource and referral agencies operate a substitute placement service to inform interested centers about people who are available for temporary work. To join such a program, you will probably need to be interviewed, provide character references, and perhaps participate in an orientation or training program which may involve a visit to a center. This may seem like a lot of work to get a temporary job -- especially one with such low pay -- but these are important steps! People operating child care programs must take precautions to ensure that adequately prepared people work with young children.

Centers that do not use a placement agency may ask to meet with you themselves before they hire you as a sub. It's okay to decide that you prefer some centers over others. And it is also reasonable to ask if you will be reimbursed for the time you spend visiting a center, especially if you are asked to work during this visit. In the end, these procedures benefit you by helping you determine whether or not you want to be a sub and preparing you for what is a very rewarding, but taxing, job.

Subbing for the First Time at a Center

Once you are on a list or have been accepted to work as a sub by a particular center, be ready for your first call. Since it may come very early in the morning or late at night, it may be useful to keep a written list of questions by the phone. Dealing with a new employer can be exciting and nerve-wracking, and if the call is unexpected or comes at an unusual hour, it is easy to forget to ask for important information. You will probably want to know:

- the address of the center and any special instructions for locating it (centers are often housed in basements or other difficult-to-find sections of buildings)
- the number of hours you will be needed and what time to arrive in order to be ready to work with the children (some centers may want you to complete paperwork so they can process your paycheck, others may want to give you a tour, etc.)
- age group of the children you will work with (to help you be mentally prepared for your day)
- name of the person you should report to on arrival, and, if different, the name of the person you will be working with and can rely on for help
- schedule of activities and anything you should know about the center (if you will be outside, whether you need to bring your lunch)

Your First Day at a Center

Be sure to allow plenty of time to get to the center when requested -- even enough time to get lost! Better to be early and look around than to arrive late. Report to the person whose name you received over the phone. If nothing has been mentioned about the payment procedure, ask this person about forms to sign, etc.

Once you meet the person you will be working most closely with, you can ask about how the center operates and where things are. Most people will probably offer this information and some centers even have a handout for subs that includes such information as:

- emergency procedures, location of first aid kit
- schedule of the day
- special rules (kids can't ride bikes in certain areas, no toys on the climbing structures, grace is always said before meals)
- location of supplies
- special needs or concerns of individual children (allergies, physical restrictions)

If any of the information is unclear on the handout or the first time it is mentioned to you, don't hesitate to ask for clarification. Confusion later on might be dangerous.

Responsibilities

Entering a child care center filled with lots of children and adults busily working and playing can be overwhelming and disconcerting. Don't get frazzled. Below are some guidelines to help you keep a clear head while working at a center:

You are there first and foremost to insure children's health and safety. Always make sure there is an adult present before you leave a room or the yard. Children should not be left alone even when sleeping.

Avoid physical force or abusive language in managing children's behavior. If you feel out of control, ask another adult for help.

Observe good health practices. Avoid smoking or the use of any drugs or alcohol when you are responsible for children. Wash your hands after assisting a child with a diaper or at the toilet and before preparing any food. Be careful when drinking hot liquids like coffee or tea; a fast moving child can cause a spill leading to a potentially serious injury.

You are there to assist other staff in caring for and teaching children. Pitch in and help when there is a need for an adult (helping take off jackets or put on smocks).

If you initiate activities with children, select sure successes. Playdough is much easier to supervise than fingerpainting. A story is always a winner. Take your lead from the other staff you are working with.

Be friendly to parents. They are often as nervous as their children about seeing an unfamiliar face at the center. Introduce yourself: "I'm Sue and I'll be subbing for Joe who is sick today." Feel free to tell parents about positive events during the day, but leave negative or troubling feedback to the permanent staff.

Leave the room tidy and help with clean-up as needed.

You are there to provide nurturing and support to all children. Responses from children will vary. Some may readily attach themselves to a new adult; others will be upset by the presence of a stranger. Try not to take children's negative reactions personally. If one child attaches to you, you can say gently that you need to help all the children while you are at the center.

Rights

The program you are working for has certain responsibilities toward you as an employee, even if you are working on a temporary basis. You have rights to:

Clear directions about what is expected of you. Sometimes in the rush of dealing with children, other staff will fail to convey important information. You can assist by asking for clarification and finding out who you can go to with questions.

Appropriate job descriptions. You should never be left alone to supervise children, nor should you be expected to plan the program or conduct parent conferences. However, if you sub for a long time at one center, your feedback on children and curricula may be sought.

Working conditions and pay required by law. Federal law mandates that all people working in child care earn at least the minimum wage. Additional state and federal laws govern overtime pay, breaks and frequency of pay (write to CCEP for information about these laws). You have a right to be paid for all the time you are required to be at a center, even if you are not in a classroom. You have a right to know how you will get paid and when you can take a break.

The protection of certain health and safety regulations. The most common violation is of the legal adult-to-child ratio (i.e. the number of children each adult is responsible for). Your local child care resource and referral agency or state department of health or social welfare can tell you what is legal in your area. It's a good idea to be aware of these laws and how they affect you. If you are asked to supervise more children than the legal limit, you have the right and the responsibility to say you consider it unsafe and you are uncomfortable with the situation. If the employer doesn't change the situation (and/or if you are asked not to return to the center) you may want to report the situation to the licensing agency. As a child care employee, you also have the right and the responsibility to report any adult behavior that is abusive to children.

Kind treatment and feedback on your performance. You can communicate your interest in learning from your experience as a sub by saying that you would like to know if something you are doing is helpful or if there is something you should stop doing. Sometimes staff are too busy at the end of the day to share their reactions. You can tell them you would appreciate a call and that you are available to return as a sub. Be sure to leave your phone number. If you don't hear from a center again, you might contact the local resource and referral agency to see if they received an evaluation of your performance. You can also provide feedback for a center by writing a letter or making a phone call.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, because of the many pressures on people who work in child care, few subs ever hear that their energy and talents have made a tremendous difference to other child care workers, parents and children. This causes many subs to downplay the value of their work, overlooking some of their rights and responsibilities in the process. However, by recognizing your rights and by being well prepared, you can ensure that you receive the information and help you need to do your job well and to experience the many rewards of working in child care.

For more information on this subject, see the CCEP booklet, "A Good Sub is Hard to Find."

IN-HOME CARE

"I've been teaching in centers for the last six years and feel like I would benefit from a change of environment. I still want to work with kids, but starting my own family day care home isn't feasible. Recently I've seen articles in magazines such as Ms. and Working Mother about in-home providers. I'm wondering how to determine if 'in-home' would be a good change for me. Any ideas?"

In an "in-home" arrangement, you care for one or more children from the same or different families in one of the children's homes. You are not an "au pair" or "nanny" who typically lives in the family home, nor are you a housekeeper responsible for cooking, cleaning, shopping, etc. Our definition of child care by a trained provider does not include these responsibilities. If you are willing to perform these added chores, make sure that they do not interfere with your child care duties and that you are appropriately compensated for the additional work they involve.

Perhaps the biggest appeal of in-home care is the way in which workers can be very closely involved with a few children in a relaxed setting without the distractions and dispersed energy encountered with a larger group. In many ways in-home care is more independent than other types of care. You will not be supervised directly each day and you are on your own to plan activities. However, the parents you work for are technically your bosses. With this in mind, remember that it is essentially their environment, cultural emphasis and values that will constitute your work setting. While your input and expertise with children will hopefully be solicited and appreciated, you will have to adapt to the space, equipment, toys and books that are available.

Although in-home care often creates a very personal relationship between you and the parents, you nonetheless are involved in an employer-employee relationship. As in any other business arrangement, it will be essential to have a written contract between the parties. Your contract should state your responsibilities, the wage you will be paid, the schedule of payment, and who is responsible for disability and liability insurance, worker's compensation, social security, unemployment and health insurance premiums. (A good resource on employment status is the BANANAS booklet on Share Care. For a copy send $1.00 to BANANAS, 6501 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA 94609.) You will also want to come to agreement with your employers about what food you will eat while on the job and any concerns about phone calls, visitors, using the television and radio, etc.

Before negotiating wages with a family, find out what other in-home providers are earning in your community. By law, you must earn at least minimum wage as a domestic employee. If you agree to perform housework chores, be sure to find out the going rate for these services. Often they are higher than child care fees! Unlike other jobs, in-home care does not have a formal structure for raises, bonuses for completing coursework, or vacation or sick leave. You must build these benefits into your agreement with families.

Working alone, you may miss both the ongoing contact and shared responsibility of center care. Before taking a job, ask yourself how you will get adequate feedback and evaluate whether or not you would be comfortable managing everything from activities to emergencies by yourself. Find out what resources exist in your community for in-home providers to exchange ideas and get moral support. Check out activities at the local library, park, YMCA or recreation department that will help you combat the destructive aspects of working by yourself.

CHILD CARE LAW CENTER:
A Unique Community Resource

Federal and state law affects child care providers in many areas, such as licensing, personnel, zoning, taxation, insurance, liability and child abuse reporting. Many of these laws were drafted and passed in order to protect children, families and providers, and California law offers some of the best protection in the United States. But the legal bureaucracy can also be a time-consuming and aggravating maze. Fortunately, child care providers have a valuable source of information and legal help: the Child Care Law Center.

The Child Care Law Center serves as a legal resource on child care issues for the local, state and national child care communities. The Center's services are available to parents, attorneys, child care centers, family day care providers, policy makers, governmental and community agencies, unions and employers.

The Child Care Law Center provides:

Technical assistance on selected regulatory, business, tax and public benefit law matters.

Representation free of charge to qualified legal services projects, and on cases of importance to the child care community, through staff and a network of cooperating volunteer attorneys.

Training/educational seminars to provide preventive law information to the child care community, and to inform the legal community of legal issues in child care.

Publications explaining liability, insurance, non-profit incorporation, tax-exempt status, contracts, taxes, child abuse, zoning, building codes, school-age child care, and legal and tax aspects of employer-supported child care. Write for a free publication list.

A Law and Policy Resources Bank for legislation, cases, briefs and legal memoranda on critical legal issues in child care. Write for more information.

Advocacy support and policy development on legislative and regulatory issues, undertaken to improve local, state and national policies toward child care. The Law Center has been especially active in the areas of licensing standards and enforcement; consideration of child care in the land use planning process; taxes and benefits; school-age child care; child abuse reporting; and the employment rights of child care workers.

The Child Care Law Center can be reached at 22 Second St., Fifth Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105, (415) 495-5498. Service calls are taken Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, from 9-12.

B. Working Relationships

STAFF RELATIONS

Relationships with co-workers can make or break a job. In our first child care working conditions survey (Whitebook, et.al., Children Today, January - February 1981) most interviewees said that staff relationships were second only to children as a source of **job satisfaction.** Yet, many of the same people felt staff relations were a tremendous source of **job stress.** This seeming contradiction makes sense when we consider the child care environment and the interdependence of staff.

Child care involves hard physical work, intense personal relationships with many people, and a myriad of responsibilities and distractions . . . all for long hours each day. The broad range of roles staff perform can be simultaneously stimulating and draining. Like most close relationships, staff share both the highs and lows with each other.

Sources of Staff Tension

Even in the best of work environments, tensions arise due to misunderstandings, low energy, overwork, etc. When work is done with small monetary rewards and poor working conditions, staff tension can reach dangerously high levels. Inadequate funds for subs, breaks or supplies, let alone good salaries or benefits, fuel some conflicts between staff by increasing everyone's tension level.

In our 1981 study, as well as in our discussions with child care workers, several other key stressors have been repeatedly mentioned:

- **Differences in background, philosophy of child rearing/education and/or work style.** Without clarification about how children should be taught and disciplined or how tasks should be approached, misunderstandings quickly arise.

- **Unclear job descriptions accompanied by inequities in the division of labor.** Resentment revolves around pay and job title differentials which do not represent differences in actual duties performed, as well as lack of clarity in work assignments and program responsibilities.

- **Unfair decision-making procedures.** Anger is quick to surface when people feel excluded from input into policies affecting their work environment.

- **General devaluation of child care work.** Lack of societal recognition undermines workers' self-images and creates high expectations from co-workers for much-needed validation and respect.

Establish Communication Systems

Much conflict can be nipped in the bud when staff talk with each other openly and regularly. The key to resolving conflict lies in the ability to hear each other's perspectives. Although there's no right time for communicating, staff meetings work well for most groups. Create a dependable system, so that people know they will have the chance to air their gripes rather than let them fester. Occasional social events where people relax together can help people communicate better on the job.

Managing or structuring meetings can take many forms. If you as a staff are not sure where or how to start talking to each other about issues, get help from an outside facilitator. Check local resources for free or low-cost consultants. If you want to go "on your own," you might want to rotate meeting leaders, to encourage full participation from everyone involved. Sometimes topical meetings are a good icebreaker (for example, focus on your own childhood as a way to raise issues about child rearing philosophy).

While meetings can degenerate into unproductive gripe sessions, it's important to allow people the opportunity to "get things off their chests." You can circumvent "dead end" complaining by focusing together on causes of the problems and strategies for improvement. Sort out the external stressors from the personal ones; then, decide which ones your group can work on with given resources, and which ones require a more long range approach such as policy changes or more money. (You might not be able to afford all new wheel toys, but you might be able to change the room furniture to minimize some problems. Likewise, you probably can't avoid some personality conflicts, but you can redistribute jobs so that someone who doesn't like being outside can do more dishes or vice versa.)

Staff need to clarify why they are doing certain things that bother others. Teachers may not know that aides don't get paid breaks and that's why they resent staying an extra five or ten minutes; aides may not know that teachers are being asked to over-enroll children and cut back on supplies because of a budget deficit. The most important thing in staff relationships is to listen to each other and support each other when we can . . . remembering that we're all in this together.

Review or Create New Job Descriptions

Fair job descriptions in child care must be simple but inclusive, definite but changeable. Unfortunately, many job descriptions were developed just to fulfill a licensing requirement, and have little basis in reality. In our study we found that aides, teachers and even some directors performed very similar duties despite differences in pay and title. Variation in training, experience and length of time at the center must be acknowledged, but not at the expense of ignoring what people actually do.

A useful exercise to clarify problems relating to job descriptions involves revising or rewriting them as a group. Assess who does what and when, and who gets paid for what. Although initially time consuming, this process creates a wonderful opportunity to validate each other's hard work ("Boy, I didn't realize you did that too!"), clarify misunderstandings ("Oh, I thought you were supposed to empty the diaper bucket at noon!") and share pet peeves and plums ("I love to do attendance but hate ordering food. Can we trade?"). Periodic review of such minuscule details can go a long way toward preventing later conflicts.

Additionally:

- Statements like ". . . shall assist the teacher . . ." or ". . . shall assume duties as assigned by . . ." can be misleading and ambiguous. Rather, list all the "musts" of a position and then outline what other tasks "can be asked" of the worker. Distinguish negotiable and non-negotiable responsibilities.

- If a staff member holds more than one job title (e.g. teacher and bus driver), consider each a distinct position to prevent legal and personnel problems if an employee wants to quit one but not the other.

- Make sure your job descriptions are compatible with your center's personnel policies and daily schedules. For example, include weekly curriculum meetings in the description if they are regularly scheduled and the worker is expected to attend them.

Clarify Decision-Making Power

While often not explicit, every organization creates a system for making decisions. Sometimes the process will be quite straightforward with obvious leaders, other times rhetoric camouflages the behind-the-scenes power dynamic. Tensions surface most commonly when people are confused about their degree of influence. ("We thought toys on our list would be purchased, but you bought things we didn't request.")

To minimize stress around decisions, begin with a review of existing, explicit policies. Learn about your center's corporate structure (is it non-profit, for-profit, etc.?) and what legal limits that structure places on the formal decision-making body (usually the Board of Directors). The by-laws of your center will describe the membership of the corporation, the election process and the times and places of meetings. If your center is non-profit, all of this information is open to the public as is the budget. If the center is private proprietary, you may not review fiscal or corporate information without permission of the owners. If the center is part of a larger organization (YMCA, Social Service Agency, etc.), you will have to find out what their by-laws state as to board composition and policy structure.

Utilize formal processes as much as possible. Attend board meetings, submit requests for board agenda items and, if possible, arrange for staff representation on the board. Employees can constitute up to 49% of the board in a non-profit agency and can be non-voting reps in other programs.

Encourage communication between board members, other administrative personnel and staff. Host coffees, write letters and invite people to have lunch with you and the children. Increased contact helps people understand each other's work and become more sympathetic to requests for policy input. If administrators witness teachers at work, the need for breaks becomes clearer to them. Likewise, if staff can learn more about the budget and the financial constraints of the center, they can make more realistic suggestions about supplies and improvements in wages and benefits.

Becoming better versed in using formal decision-making processes leads to improvement in dealing with more informal power issues between staff. People can distinguish which issues they really do have a say in, and can stop blaming one another for things over which they have no control (see CCEP handout on "Shared Decision-Making").

Look Beyond the Center

While the above suggestions can reduce tensions between staff, they cannot erase them all. Whenever people work closely together there will often be personality clashes which can make life pretty miserable. Hopefully, staff can create vehicles for keeping conflicts in check so that they don't overshadow the joys of center life or compromise the quality of care children receive.

Beyond the commonplace tensions, child care staff are saddled with social realities that undermine their job satisfaction. Low pay and lack of status wear us all down. Just as the divorce rate rises when people are unemployed, so our poor working conditions fuel turnover and the exit of trained staff from the field.

Staff must acknowledge how these economic stresses affect both our morale and our relationships with one another. Sometimes just verbalizing these issues helps to put some of the tension we feel in perspective. Additionally, if staff can work together to design ways to upgrade working conditions and status, relationships with one another can be strengthened rather than weakened by one of the primary sources of stress in the child care work environment.

* This article was prepared with the assistance of the Women's Labor Project.

PARENT-STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

"How can I get parents to understand what we're doing and what we need from them?"

"How can I make them see how important it is to pick up their children on time?"

"Why can't the teachers keep better track of my child's possessions?"

"Why can't the center be more flexible about hours?"

Sound familiar? Parents and child care workers may be involved in a "simple" business arrangement, but because of the intense nature of the work, powerful frustrations and tensions can arise between them -- just as they arise in any close relationship. Despite a shared interest in the child, parents and staff have different short-term goals, and these can create conflict.

Parents:

- want individual attention for the child
- want a low fee
- want a flexible schedule
- find it hard to leave work, or take a day off, when the child is sick

Child Care Workers:

- care for a group, and need to see all the children as special
- want to be paid well
- want specified work hours, and want to close promptly
- want to control the spread of illness, and can't devote individual attention to a sick child

Yet by following a few basic ground rules, you can make the partnership successful and satisfying.

Mutual respect must be built into the parent-staff relationship from the onset. Parents need reassurance that the staff is accessible. A patronizing, "we know better" attitude on the part of staff can make parents feel intimidated and resentful. Both sides are "experts"; you know about group child care and child development, but the parent knows far more about the child's history and personality. Without communication, neither has the whole picture. You know what happens at child care and the parent knows what happens at home.

The best means of communication is a consistent, individual interchange between parents and staff. Ideally, this interchange is a two-way street, but often it doesn't happen unless you as a child care worker initiate it. A good standard to follow is that no parent should arrive or leave without a greeting and an "opening" for further conversation. If extended discussion is impossible because you're busy with the children, make an appointment. Encourage parents to talk about their complaints, rather than letting them fester. By listening and showing a willingness to take action, you can prevent problems from growing. And to prevent misunderstandings, be sure to record all accidents, injuries and illnesses -- using a simple "accident report" form -- and notify parents immediately.

Open relationships between parents and staff can begin early on with the use of entrance interviews. These give parents a time to learn about program philosophy, policies, regulations and parent involvement; and they give staff a time to learn about the family's personal life and their expectations for their child's care.

The program should also outline its expectations and policies in a parent manual. A manual can reinforce information shared in the entrance interview, and give parents a source to refer to when in doubt about a particular policy.

Every center should have a reliable, ongoing information exchange system to share daily events and long-range plans. Try a simple center newsletter, a parent-staff bulletin board (kept up-to-date!), or potlucks. Hold discussion groups on childhood issues, or bring in an occasional guest speaker on a special topic. Parents also deserve plenty of advance warning about changes -- especially staff vacations or departures, and increases in fees.

Parent conferences are a must for ensuring that there are opportunities for a more detailed dialogue about each child -- and centers should make these conferences part of the staff's paid work time.

Encourage parents to remain involved by visiting the program. This can help parents not only to feel more comfortable with their child's care, but to gain more understanding of and respect for what child care workers do all day. Parents who have observed you on the job can often be your strongest allies in advocating for better pay or working conditions. Give parents copies of the Child Care Employee Project's brochure, "Who's Caring for Your Kids? What every parent should know about child care providers."

Find ways for willing parents to participate in the program, such as a seat on the Board, helping to prepare the center's budget, or other donations of skills and time.

Occasionally there will be parents and staff who just don't get along. If this involves only one staff member and one parent, perhaps another staff person can be assigned to act as the primary liaison for that family. If most of the staff has trouble with a parent, however, or most parents have trouble with one staff member, termination of either party may be in order -- but only after a fair hearing.

And still, there will be days when Isaac's coat just cannot be found, or when a parent is unavoidably late again. Trust and good feeling can break down fast! Keeping a sense of humor -- or counting to ten before speaking -- can keep our inevitable "goofs" from ruining a good relationship, and ruining good care for children.

Developing trust and warmth between parents and staff is neither quick nor easy; it takes teamwork and compromise. But if you take steps to build good communication and prevent misunderstandings, working with parents can be one of the greatest pleasures of the job.

WORKING IN PARENT CO-OPS

Parent cooperative nursery schools, originally started in the United States during the early part of this century, provide a unique blend of child care and parent education. By providing opportunities for parent participation in the child's nursery school day, co-ops create a supportive learning environment for all members of the family.

These programs may be run independently by a group of parents or sponsored by a community college or other adult educational institution. Traditionally, co-ops have provided a three- or four-hour morning nursery school, staffed by several participating parents and an employed teacher/director who is hired either by the parents or the administrating agency. Teacher/directors in traditional half-day co-ops find advantages as well as dilemmas in this work. (For information about the issues involved in working in a full-day co-op, see the section on "Providing Extended Day Care in Parent Co-ops and Nursery Schools.")

Special Rewards of Working in Parent Co-ops

> "With many adults around I am free to work on a one-to-one basis with a child and to do special projects requested by the kids."
>
> "I really enjoy the combination of teaching children and working with adults."
>
> "The parents bring unique skills to our program. There is one mom, for example, who always brings in science projects."
>
> "Because parents see me in action, they appreciate my skills."

Being a teacher in a parent co-op is rewarding in many ways. One not only interacts with small children each day but is a teacher of adults as well. Parents often choose co-ops because they want to be closely involved with their child's education and are enthusiastic and energetic participants in the program. Teachers appreciate the ability to see parent/child interaction, which gives them greater insights into each child and allows them to form close relationships with each family group. This contact better enables teachers to plan curriculum appropriate to the needs of individual children. Parent participation may also relieve the teacher/director of many administrative and maintenance functions.

Special Stresses That Go With The Job

On the other hand, there are problems which sometimes diminish the rewards of co-op work. A co-op teacher/director is in the unique position of being both an employee of and supervisor to the same group: she is hired by and responsible to the school membership (or administering agency) and at the same time is in charge of supervising and training those parents who have hired her.

Although funding from parent fees is relatively stable, salaries are often low. Medical and other benefits are uncommon. The resulting high turnover of teachers keeps parent boards from increasing salaries because teachers are not around long enough to receive cost-of-living increases or to negotiate for higher salaries. Often the teacher is expected to do many tasks without compensation -- staff meetings, home visits, parent conferences, parent education, counseling referrals and fundraising efforts may be unspoken expectations of the job.

Parents may assume that teacher/directors have time for these activities because their work at the school is half time. But in reality, a conscientious teacher puts in hours of "invisible" work before and after school. Even though parents have the responsibility for numerous administrative functions, the teacher needs to work closely with them to make sure these functions are effectively carried out (e.g., field trips, snack purchases, maintenance, etc.). As one teacher says:

> "I know I don't have to be involved in everything, but if I don't help plan maintenance, for example, I end up paying a price because things just don't get done."

And because the teacher is continually supervised by parents there can be negative feedback.

> "Because all the parents have chosen our school, they assume that everyone here has the same ideas and philosophy about child rearing. I'm the only one who knows how diverse the opinions really are, and I'm the one who has to somehow pull them all together."
>
> "Sometimes I feel like I have 21 bosses . . . everyone feels that the school belongs to them and I have to deal with all their demands."

Additionally, the teacher is in an awkward position with parents. Though there is much dialogue and feedback, specific discussion of one child's problems with another child's parent is unethical. This can leave the teacher feeling isolated, without a colleague with whom to brainstorm solutions to a learning or behavior problem. It is also difficult to maintain a sense of consistent discipline with the children when there is a different set of parents dealing with classroom situations each day.

Even when a positive and close relationship exists between teacher and parents some difficult issues can arise. The teacher often finds herself in the role of support person to the parents. Negotiating for raises and improved working conditions is difficult in the close familial atmosphere that exists in many co-ops. The teacher has to educate the parents about inequities and defend her own interests. These are sensitive issues to discuss with any employer, and even more difficult when the employer is also your friend.

Suggestions for Change

Form a support group with other co-op teachers and day care staff. In some communities co-op nursery schools have pursued common goals by forming cooperative coordinating councils. In other areas, co-op staff meet to discuss and gain perspective on issues concerning parents and children. There is every reason in the world (except that it is more unpaid time) for co-op teachers to meet regularly for the purposes of mutual support and information sharing, to develop negotiating strategies and to discuss working conditions.

If a co-op coordinating council already exists in your community, you may want to start using it as a focus for pushing for benefits. While individual co-ops may be ineligible to enroll one or two people in a group medical plan, a number of co-ops can create a medical group together. The co-op council might also serve as a forum for morning teacher/directors and extended day care staff to work together to raise the parents' awareness of their concerns.

Request that your co-op develop a personnel manual which:

1) Clearly defines duties and responsibilities of teacher/directors.
2) Establishes parity in wages and benefits for extended day care staff and other classified personnel.
3) Sets up a grievance procedure for staff and co-op members.
4) Protects staff from summary dismissal.

Request periodic professional consultation to provide resources for discussing behavior or learning problems you are not able to discuss with parents.

Plan a parent education meeting on burn-out. Parents as well as staff in co-ops experience burn-out, and may be able to brainstorm together on methods to avoid it.

Figure out your own limits and make them clear to parents. This may take many forms. Some examples are:

1) Request that parents contact you during certain hours only. For example, no calls after 8 p.m.
2) Refer parents to appropriate resources. For example, in one co-op all "complaints" are directed first to a board member rather than the teacher.

Contact the Child Care Employee Project (CCEP). We will consult with you about problems related to working conditions.

This article was prepared in collaboration with Helen Stein, Nancee Bailey and Russ Henry.

C. Staying Healthy

WARNING: Child Care Work
May Be Hazardous to Your Health

As most child care staff are painfully aware, working conditions in the field leave much room for improvement. Low wages, minimal benefits and unpaid overtime contribute to staff burnout and rapid turnover. What's more, as serious as these conditions are, they do not represent the whole story.

In a 1978 study of working conditions conducted by the Child Care Employee Project, two thirds of the child care workers responding reported that their health was adversely affected by their jobs. In 1982, the Project pursued this finding by conducting a nationwide survey of child care health and safety working conditions (Child Care Employee Project Newsletter, Vol.2, No.1, Spring 1983). The results indicate that, indeed, there are serious health and safety hazards present for staff in many child care environments. Workers suffer from illness, emotional distress, physical disabilities and exposure to harmful chemicals.

Very often, staff will ignore the ill health effects caused by their jobs, concerned that children's needs should always be considered first. While it is our job to respond to children's needs, what child will benefit from a burned-out, ill caregiver? Placing value on our own health and safety will help both us and the children, by preserving our physical and mental health and by insuring that we will be vital and healthy people, and child care workers, for a long, long time.

What Staff Can Do

After identifying hazardous health and safety working conditions, staff can bring their findings and concerns to the attention of their administration, or the administration can initiate the discussion with staff. Staff should request training and materials to learn more about improving working conditions and avoiding their negative consequences. Listed here are some basic suggestions and resources.

Illness/Infection

Be sure you are following the most up-to-date procedures for preventing illness and infection (yours and the children's) in the center. Check out the suggestions in these articles:

- "Preventing Illness in Infant/Toddler Day Care," Ruth Highberger and Mary Boynton, Young Children, March 1983.

- "Health Update: Infection in Day Care," Susan Aronson, M.D., Child Care Information Exchange, March/April 1983.

Body Strains

Most child care-related injuries occur in the lower back. Such injuries can be reoccurring. Ask your director to have a physical therapist come in and demonstrate preventive back care. (Many physical therapists will do this for low or no cost.) Until then, follow these tips:

- To lift, use your legs, not your back.
- Bend your knees and lift from a partial squat position.
- Face what you're lifting; don't bend and twist.
- Hold things as close to your center of gravity as possible, not on your hips.
- Bend your knees when you reach for something.
- Push more than pull.
- Change your position often.
- Keep your knees and hips at the same level. (When sitting in a small chair, sit on a telephone book.)
- Clear a space on the floor so you can do periodic back stretching exercises.
- Don't use child-sized furniture when you can avoid it. Use regular, comfortable adult-sized furniture for breaks and staff meetings. Make an adult-sized table or counter available for eating and doing desk work.
- Ask for help when you need it.

Hazardous Chemicals and Art Materials

Many items used in day care, even some of those listed as "non-toxic," can have harmful effects on adults and children. Substances may irritate skin and eyes, vapors can harm respiratory systems, and chemicals can enter the bloodstream through cuts and infections. Always maintain good ventilation and circulating air in the center, and use gloves when working with dangerous or irritating substances. Some other hints to avoid trouble are:

Cleaning Solutions

- Avoid known dangerous substances.
- Read labels carefully to find out ingredients, to learn how to use solutions safely, and to know what to do when problems occur.
- Learn the signs of distress from inhalation, ingestion and skin contact.
- Don't mix chemical cleaners such as ammonia and chlorine bleach.
- Teach new staff members about the safe use of chemical and art materials.

Art Materials

- Learn about the art materials you use. For information on non-toxic art materials write to:

The Arts and Crafts Institute
715 Boylton St.
Boston, MA 02116

or address your concerns and questions to:

Art Hazards Information Center
5 Beekman St.
New York, NY 10038
(212) 227-6231

- Use water-based colored markers and other art materials.
- Use wet clay and liquid paint. (Dry clay contains silica, which can be toxic when inhaled. Other dry materials to avoid are instant paper mache, pastels, aerosol sprays, and powdered tempera.)
- Use poster paints instead of glazes on clay.
- Keep the art area well ventilated.
- Clean the area well so that toxic dusts do not accumulate.
- Keep food or drinks out of the art area.

ART MATERIALS UPDATE (July 1988)

Since this article was first published, California's state health department has begun to take an active role in promoting safe art materials for children. Address questions to:

Art and Craft Toxicology Unit
Department of Health Services
2151 Berkeley Way
Berkeley, CA 94704
(415) 540-3063

This unit has also compiled a "California List of Acceptable Art and Craft Materials for Kindergarten and Grades 1 Through 6," available from the Department of Education, P.O. Box 944272, Sacramento, CA 94244; (916) 322-4015.

PESTICIDES

- Try to avoid the use of chemical pesticides (little is known about their long-term effects) by emphasizing good sanitation procedures.

- Caulk all cracks around sinks, cupboards, moldings and bathroom fixtures.
- Install new washers on faucets to eliminate dripping water.
- Store all food in tightly sealed glass jars.
- Put away all animal food or dirty dishes.
- Seal your garbage.
- Use boric acid for hard-to-get-at places. (Boric acid is safe except when ingested, so make sure children can't reach it.)
- If you must spray with pesticides, request that spraying be done when needed, not at the exterminator's convenience.
- For more information and resources on alternative pest management contact:

The John Muir Institute for
the Integration of Applied Sciences, Inc.
1010 Grayson St.
Berkeley, CA 94710

Stress

Limited resources, staff scheduling and communication problems are often the causes of stress on the job. Staff can call upon and work with their administration to:

- Clarify and improve substitute policy.
- Institute a dependable break policy.
- Investigate possible medical coverage alternatives.
- Design and enact appropriate grievance procedures.
- Participate in shared decision-making.
- Improve staff-parent relationships.

Legal Recourse

The identification and elimination of hazardous health and safety working conditions requires an alert staff and responsive administration. The combination of the two can ultimately reduce the likelihood of injury and illness to staff members. However, if unsafe conditions continue to exist despite staff efforts to have them corrected, or if a staff member is injured while on the job, workers have some available options.

- Contact the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to report hazardous conditions and request an inspection. (Unfortunately, many child care-related hazards are not regulated in this manner.)

- If injured on the job, staff may be eligible for Worker's Compensation. Consult a lawyer who specializes in this area immediately. No fee will be assessed at this time. Attorney's fees will be determined and awarded by the Worker's Compensation Board after a settlement is reached.

- Find out if you may collect Disability Insurance benefits while awaiting a Worker's Compensation settlement. Contact your state employment department to find out more information.

- For more information on occupational health and safety contact:

Labor Occupational Health Program
Institute of Industrial Relations
Center for Labor Research and Education
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720
(415) 642-5507

Checklist for Health and Safety Conditions

Staff can use this preliminary checklist
to identify major problem areas.

ILLNESS/INFECTION

1. In the past year, how many staff have been exposed to and/or contracted:

   head lice _____ flu _____ colds _____ sore throat _____ impetigo _____

   childhood illnesses _____ hepatitis _____ giardiasis _____

2. In the past year, how many staff have worked when sick? ______

3. Is there an adequate and effective substitute policy? ______

4. Is there established policy for caring for sick children? ______

   Is it always enforced? ______?

5. Is there a separate area set aside for sick children? _______

6. How and where are children diapered? ________________________________

   ____

7. How is the diapering area cleaned? __________________________________

   ____

8. Are staff members screened for rubella? ______ TB? ______

BODY STRAINS

1. In the past year, how many staff have suffered from back/neck/shoulder or leg strains? ______

2. Is there adult-sized furniture available for staff? ______

3. How often do staff members move heavy equipment or furniture? _________

4. Is there adequate and easily accessible storage available? ________

CHEMICALS AND ART MATERIALS

1. Name the chemicals/cleansers used on site. ______________________________

____

2. Are all chemicals/cleansers labeled properly with directions for use?

______ with warnings? _____ with instructions for emergencies? ______

3. Do you use: powdered tempera _____ permanent markers _____

dry clay _____ lead glazes _____ instant paper mache _____

others ____

4. Have staff members experienced skin, nose, eye or respiratory problems from cleaning solutions and/or art materials? ______

5. Do you spray with pesticides to control fleas, roaches or other vermin? ______

STRESS

1. How many staff members feel their job is stressful? ______

2. What areas do they think are most stressful? ______________________________

____

3. How many staff have experienced:

headaches _____ trouble sleeping _____ muscle strain _____

eyestrain _____ changes in menstrual cycle _____

digestive/stomach problems _____

nausea/dizziness _____ exhaustion _____

4. Are there established, effective policies for:

breaks? _____ pregnant workers? _____ grievance resolution? _____

SPECIAL STRESSES OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE WORK

School-age child care (SACC) grows increasingly more a part of American family life as more women work outside their homes. Programs vary tremendously. They are located in community centers, churches, classrooms, gyms and cafeterias of elementary schools, family day care homes, day care centers, parks, YWCA's/YMCA's and boys' and girls' clubs. Some receive public or foundation monies, others operate solely on funds collected from parent fees. Yet SACC staff face markedly similar work situations, and there is wide agreement about the joys and pitfalls of the job.

On the positive side, one typically hears such comments as:

"I love working with school-age kids because they communicate so much with their humor. They do everything in a big way."

"It's the informal environment that I like. I've been a public school teacher and I prefer this setting -- it's more relaxed and flexible."

SACC staff often mention that they like the degree of choice, the independence and the atmosphere of their jobs. They also appreciate the children's involvement in decision making, and the many opportunities to deal with the burning issues on the minds (and therefore the lips) of their charges.

But many concerns threaten to undermine the joys of SACC work. INADEQUATE COMPENSATION TOPS THE LIST! Despite education and training, many SACC staff earn little more than the minimum wage, with few if any benefits -- much like preschool child care workers, rather than elementary school teachers. Like preschool workers, SACC staff face the dilemma of struggling to be paid well while most parents, whose fees cover salaries, are struggling to pay for services. Without greater social recognition and funding, this dilemma cannot be totally resolved.

Other frequently voiced complaints include:

"Our program operates only after school for most of the year and then changes to full time on holidays and vacations. I've tried to get a second job, but the schedule change makes it almost impossible."

"I work from 7-9 a.m. and from 2-6 p.m. I can't support myself on six hours of pay, but I can't really take another job during the break. Often I have preparation or other work, not to mention that I need the rest."

"Because all of our staff is part time, no one receives any of the usual benefits -- like paid vacation, sick time or health insurance."

"We have a very hard time finding qualified staff and/or training for our staff which meets the unique needs of school age child care. The community colleges and other educational programs do not include school age concerns as part of their child development curriculum. Other training resources are rare."

"It's very stressful working with children who range from age five to age twelve. It seems almost impossible to plan activities that work for everyone."

"Safety issues make me nervous. We have so many children to watch -- 1 to 20 ratios are legal here. Plus, when it gets dark early and kids are tired, it's a perfect breeding ground for accidents."

"Our program is located in a school and you can really tell that the public school teachers don't respect us -- they treat us like second class citizens. Their attitudes are bad enough but their higher pay scales really irk us!"

"Relations with parents can be strained. When we see them at the end of the day -- a stressful time for everybody -- we often hear more than our share of gripes. We're blamed for jackets lost at school or notes from teachers that didn't make it home. Plus, because we're not seen as dealing with children's academic lives, our perspective on them is often overlooked -- even though we spend many important hours with them daily, often involved with their homework."

"It's hard to figure out where I fit as an SACC staffer -- I'm not a public school teacher, not a preschool day care person, or a recreation leader -- there doesn't seem to be a 'group' that I belong to."

What You Can Do

Many of the problems facing SACC staff, and other child care workers, require changing public awareness in order to make child care a better supported social service. SACC staffers must join with other advocates to devise public policies to increase funds for children's services. The first step is to build a school-age child care identity by connecting with others. Some suggestions:

Form a mutual assistance group of SACC staff. A support group can meet regularly to deal with particular SACC issues, such as improving communication with schools, planning programs for mixed age groups, and investigating health benefits for currently uncovered staff. (See Unit III section on health coverage.) The groups can help combat isolation and encourage staff in their efforts to tackle other issues.

Organize a community/state consortium or association of school age workers. Several states and regions have formed organizations to advocate for better programs, more funding and increased training resources. A group of these associations has formed a National School Age Child Care Association (SACCA) which meets every year at the NAEYC National Conference.

Organize and participate in SACC workshops at statewide and national meetings and conferences. Besides providing an opportunity to brainstorm, such events help build awareness of SACC issues among other early childhood professionals.

Form a group to organize a school-age conference. This is an excellent way to begin providing low cost training and to launch advocacy groups. California, New Jersey and several other states have established ongoing training and peer support through conferences.

Advocate for colleges and other training institutions to include school age child care as part of their programs. Work with teachers of child development and administration courses by offering them resources and volunteering as a guest lecturer. Colleges are becoming more aware of the importance of pre-service and in-service education of school-age practitioners.

Publicize school-age child care in the local media. Enlist parent support in bringing the issue of SACC to the public through local papers, TV and radio. Participate in community events such as fairs and parades. Keeping the program in the public eye helps show the importance of the service you are providing, and lays the groundwork for future support.

Conduct a salary and benefits survey. A survey is an excellent vehicle for informing parents and the general public of your situation and your need for better compensation. In one New England community, for example, a survey of SACC programs led to an increase in salaries and benefits. (See the CCEP booklet, "Salary Surveys: How to Conduct One in Your Community," for information about gathering and publicizing salary data.)

Work toward a comparable wage agenda. Conduct research and develop a comparable wage survey. A recreation and parks department in Sacramento, California has been successful in establishing a new wage scale for their school age child care program through this kind of effort (see CCEP's publication, Raising Salaries: Strategies That Work).

Building an SACC identity takes time. Meanwhile, concrete improvements can still happen in your own work place. Ingenuity, and an unwillingness to let problems overcome the positive aspects of the job, have led to some creative solutions. Because SACC programs vary so much, these might need to be adapted to your particular situation.

Change your staffing patterns to maximize the number of full-time staff. Combine jobs (e.g. preschool a.m. and SACC p.m.) or offer longer hours of care to make full-time employment a priority, thus offering some staff a stable situation with better pay and working conditions.

Investigate your legal rights. Make sure you are well-informed about what you are entitled to, such as paid breaks, paid overtime or split-shift premiums. (See section on employment rights in Unit II.) In California, some employees are eligible for an extra hour's pay at minimum wage if their work day is interrupted by a non-paid interval other than a meal period. To find out if your state has a split-shift premium, contact your state Department of Labor.

Become visible in the public school. In public school-based programs (and in others as well), many SACC staff have improved their image with teachers through involvement in meetings about children (where school personnel are often impressed by the SACC staff's insights), attendance at all-school faculty meetings and functions (you may have to try to get invited if you aren't already), and offers to take care of classroom pets and plants during vacations when the public schools are closed but you are in operation.

Make the SACC program a meeting ground for parents and teachers. Take the initiative and bring parents and teachers together on your turf, rather than feeling excluded from school events. Invite parents and teachers to conferences about children where you raise your concerns; plan an open house potluck where the children can share their after-school lives with teachers and parents. Arrange field trips for the classes of children in your program so they can see where some of their peers hang out. This mixing will lead to more awareness of your work and more sensitivity to other parts of children's daily lives. Offer parents and teachers any resources you can share (books, games, programs). Establish trust with parents. Parents in one program have asked the SACC staff to attend teacher conferences with them!

Make use of resources. Make sure you know what resources are available to you, and use them. For example, many cities have volunteer bureaus which can assist you in recruiting and training committed participants (seniors, high school students, etc.) to counteract high ratios. For a listing in your area, contact:

VOLUNTEER
The National Center
1111 North 19th St., Suite 500
Arlington, VA 22209
(703) 276-0542

For an information packet, send SASE.

They also publish a "Volunteer Center Director" which is available for $5.00.

Contact the SCHOOL AGE CHILD CARE PROJECT. They consult with school-age programs around the country about resources for staff training and on consortia and state SACC associations.

SACC PROJECT
Wellesley College Center for Research on Women
Wellesley, Massachusetts 02181
(617) 431-1453

Contact the California School Age Consortium for information on their quarterly newsletter and training conferences. They can also tell you if your area or state has a SACC association and how to form one.

CSAC
3221 20th St.
San Francisco, CA 94110
(415) 826-1669

There are several good publications about school age child care. Contact School-Age Notes for their bibliography and subscribe to their newsletter, which has continuing articles on program, activities, administrative issues and advocacy.

School Age Notes
P.O. Box 12106
Nashville, TN 37212
(615) 292-4957

Ask your program, or your public library, to purchase "SCHOOL AGE CHILD CARE: an Action Manual," by the SACC Project (Auburn House Publishers, 1982). Available from:

SACC PROJECT (see above)
$12.95 + $2.00 for postage & handling

Contact us at the CHILD CARE EMPLOYEE PROJECT. We will consult with you about problems related to working conditions.

This article was prepared in collaboration with Andrea Genser of the School Age Child Care Project, Wellesley, MA.

SPECIAL STRESSES OF INFANT/TODDLER CARE

Caregivers who work with infants and toddlers are often drawn to this work by its special joys: the closeness of relationships, the children's constant development, the creativity, and much more.

But as in all of child care, infant/toddler caregiving has its own problems and drawbacks. This handout will examine some of these special stresses -- and some suggestions for reducing or eliminating them.

PAY AND STATUS

Infant/toddler caregivers share the low pay and status of most child care workers, but they also face society's ambivalence about babies in child care. It is difficult for many people to accept the notion that very young children can be cared for outside of the home, or that economic pressures on parents make such care necessary. While it is hard enough to encourage increased support for child care in general, prejudices about infant and toddler care create more roadblocks for staff.

One of the toughest of these roadblocks is the fact that infant and toddler care is very expensive, mainly because of the high staff/child ratio in these programs. When impending budget cuts are combined with doubts about the value of such care, the programs and the jobs of infant/toddler caregivers become extremely vulnerable.

Infant/toddler caregivers also face a hard battle to establish themselves as professionals. In many minds, infant caregiving is a short step (if any) away from babysitting, and does not constitute "real work" or warrant "real" wages.

At the same time, infant/toddler caregivers are expected to command expert skills and training specific to caring for this age group. While this fits the definition of a "professional," infant/toddler teachers often find that they have the fewest resources available to them; there is a lack of published research, college level courses, training programs, and books specific to the field of infant/toddler group care.

What You Can Do

Talk to parents and others about what you do. Educating people about the value of your job will help you gather support for improved pay and working conditions.

Join groups who are already working to improve the situation. Find out about lobbying and policy-making efforts in your community, and assist them in their efforts. You won't feel so alone!

Demand specific training to be offered at your local community college. An organized group of interested infant/toddler caregivers can make a convincing argument to a college administrator!

Institute consistent in-service training for child care staff and parent education classes in your center. Join with other centers in your area and share resources and expertise.

PHYSICAL STRESS

Infant/toddler caregivers face continuous exposure to common infant illnesses, such as colds, flu and diarrhea. They may often find themselves tired and ill, particularly when they first start a job and haven't yet developed a resistance to infection.

Because of the close interpersonal relationships that develop between caregivers and infants, many workers feel guilty when they take time off from work for sickness or other reasons. This may be compounded by a lack of trained substitutes who are familiar to the children. Workers without sick leave provisions or health benefits may feel compelled to work when they are ill because they can't afford not to.

What You Can Do

Take care of yourself. If you are unhealthy and over-stressed, both you and the children suffer.

Learn good diapering and food preparation procedures to reduce the incidence of related diseases and illnesses.

Stay home when you are sick. Coming to work will probably make you sicker, and won't help the children and other staff.

Encourage your center to develop a reliable pool of available substitutes who have contact with the children on a frequent basis. These subs should be trained before working in the program. Have information about each child and the program on hand so that subs can do a safe and useful job. (See Unit III section, "Improving Substitute Policies" and CCEP booklet, "A Good Sub is Hard to Find.")

Encourage your center to institute health coverage and a supportive health policy. There are many options available for centers to provide full or partial health coverage for staff. (See Unit III section, "Health Coverage.") A supportive health policy encourages staff to take care of themselves by staying home when sick, providing reliable substitutes, and lessening health and safety hazards on the job.

Constant lifting and carrying of babies, using baby-size furniture, and doing routine maintenance work can also take their toll. Injured backs and sore muscles are common, and constant aggravation of these injuries can mean permanent damage.

What You Can Do

Learn the proper way to lift and carry. Invite a physical therapist to an in-service session to train the staff in these techniques.

Make adult-size furniture available. Make sure that changing tables are the correct height, and that storage is at convenient levels.

EMOTIONAL STRESS

Aside from creating physical stress, the enormous responsibility of taking care of infants (which includes translating and responding to their constant needs, as well as attending to parents and administrators) produces mental stress as well. The emotional demands of infant/toddler caregiving are often aggravated in programs in which staff do not receive breaks.

What You Can Do

Institute a break schedule. Work with your administration and other staff to design and implement a workable break policy. (See Unit III section, "Improving Break Policies.")

Create a comfortable place to relax. Too often when you get a break, there's no place to take it. Make sure that there is a quiet, comfortable place, with adult furniture, for staff to go to during their meals and breaks.

Take a walk! When the noise is unbearable, and you and the children have "cabin fever," try taking them away from the center for a change of scenery and a breath of fresh air.

Infant/toddler caregivers are intimately involved with the everyday lives of the children they care for. They are keyed into the most specific details and transition periods in each child's development, and are responsible for how children spend much of their first two years of life. Intense attachments and bonds are formed between caregiver and child which in many aspects resemble those between child and parent.

This is one of the most pleasurable rewards of infant/toddler caregiving, but emotional stress may also arise from close relationships.

What You Can Do

Recognize your own feelings. If caring for infants brings up some personal feelings about separation, having children, discipline, etc., make sure that these issues can be resolved and don't interfere with your ability to care for the children in a professional manner.

The relationships and trust that develop among staff are equally important for effective caregiving, particularly in an infant/toddler center. With so many competing needs and priorities, working without the cooperation of other staff members can be overwhelming and disastrous. The quick pace and demanding responsibilities often cannot be handled by one person alone, and a lack of teamwork can create an unsafe environment.

What You Can Do

Work together. Be sensitive to the needs of other staff members and work on communicating effectively. If there is a problem, bring it up and try and solve it together. Staff meetings can be a time to share feelings as well as information, although personal conflicts among staff may best be solved in private. Sharing information about the children will help the staff offer the best care to each individual child, and group discussion will often help you find answers to problems you've been grappling with for weeks.

Developing relationships with the children is only half the story -- the other half is communicating well with parents. For many children and parents, this is their first child care experience and the separation can be a source of great anxiety for everyone. Often, this is more difficult for parents than for the infants; there may be great doubt and guilt about leaving their baby in child care, and these feelings may be expressed subtly or not-so-subtly to the child and to the caregiver. In addition to feeling guilty, parents may resent the close attachments that form between the teacher and their child, and begin to feel left out of their child's life. The infant/toddler caregiver must recognize and respond to these concerns of parents, but this can be difficult, if one's professionalism and competency are being called into question.

Some infant/toddler caregivers face an opposite reaction from parents: they are expected to be child development experts, able to answer all questions about the child's development, and give advice about childrearing. The weight of these expectations can be oppressive for even the most knowledgeable and experienced caregiver.

Parents' expectations may be unreasonable in other ways. Parents may not trust the teacher to offer the type of care and environment they think is best for their child. Others may expect the teacher to encourage behavior (such as toilet training) before the child is ready for it. Finally, cultural and philosophical differences may produce tension.

What You Can Do

Be sensitive to parents' feelings and needs. Help reassure them that their feelings of guilt and anxiety are common. You can help them work out these issues by being available to talk, and by giving concrete evidence that many of their fears are unfounded. Understanding parents' feelings can help you take their attitudes less personally, and can alleviate stressful anger.

Communicate with parents. Show them that you are partners in their child's care by sharing anecdotes and observations about the child daily, if possible. A parent who is kept appraised of his/her child's development will feel less "left out," and more responsive and involved with the child's day care.

Inform parents about resources. Aside from your personal knowledge of child development, you may feel more comfortable referring parents to resources -- books, articles, agencies, etc. -- when you are called upon for technical or subjective advice. Helping parents make educated choices and decisions, rather than telling them what to do, is a more comfortable situation for many caregivers.

Communicate the center's philosophy clearly. Conflicts often arise when parents' expectations differ from the philosophy of the program. When parents first enroll their child, explain center procedures on such issues as toilet training and discipline, and the theory behind them. This will go a long way towards reducing conflict.

Express yourself. Parents, co-workers and directors need to know about your concerns too. Sometimes, attending to the children, the parents and all your other responsibilities can make you feel like the job is all give and no take. Protect yourself from burnout by addressing your own needs as well.

The stresses of infant/toddler care are unique, but so are the rewards. For every aggravation, there is a moment when caregiver and child connect and influence each other's lives. For every irate parent and crying infant, there is a time to sit and rock that child peacefully to sleep. For every problem, there is the pleasure of being so close, and so much a part of a child's early development.

This article was written with the assistance of Derk Richardson and Jennifer Schimida.

WHEN CHILD CARE WORKERS BECOME PREGNANT

Every child care center should have a maternity policy as part of its personnel procedures, but many centers do not -- even though the vast majority of child care workers are women in their child-bearing years. Commonly, centers use state laws governing disability as the equivalent of a maternity leave policy, or directors negotiate with individual staff members, leaving themselves open to charges of discrimination or favoritism.

Developing a Maternity Policy

Developing a policy can be difficult; it's a matter of balancing the smooth operation of the whole center with the health and rights of a pregnant employee. These are some issues to consider:

* whether a pregnant employee can be allowed to arrange a flexible work schedule;
* whether prenatal medical appointments are part of sick leave;
* how much leave can be taken before, and after, delivery;
* how much maternity leave will be paid;
* whether the person's job (or its equivalent at the same rate of pay) will be guaranteed, and for how long, when she wants to return;
* whether a new parent can have the option to return to work part-time;
* whether paternity leave, paid or unpaid, will be provided for fathers;
* whether staff can enroll their children in the center with a tuition discount.

Staying Healthy During Pregnancy

If you are pregnant and working in a child care program, learning to put a premium on your own health and safety is a major challenge, but it is essential.

The primary way to stay healthy in a child care center is to wash your hands frequently. Every center also needs a clear procedure whereby parents and staff inform each other about any possible exposures to illness; for a pregnant worker, rubella and German measles are of particular concern. Inform your medical practitioner that you are working with young children and could be exposed to childhood illnesses. You may need special treatment if you contract a virus, bacteria or parasite.

Working with young children is very demanding physically. To protect yourself from back injury, be sure to know proper lifting and carrying techniques -- such as bending your knees instead of bending from your waist.

Here are some other tips for the classroom. Bring a comfortable adult chair which is easy to move around. Instead of bending down to their level so often, ask children to climb up to you when they need special attention. Trade chores with co-workers if they require working with cleaning fluids or other toxic materials, or lifting or moving heavy objects.

The stress and fatigue of the daily routine can also be an extra hazard during pregnancy. Be sure to take your scheduled breaks, and rest during lunch -- preferably lying down, or with your feet up. The need for bathroom breaks will probably increase; ask co-workers if they can be on call to step in for a few minutes.

The pregnancy of a staff member can be a wonderful learning experience for both children and adults. But talking with the children about the pregnancy, how the mother's body will change, and what a pregnant teacher can and can't do, should be the shared responsibility of all staff, not just the pregnant teacher. Be prepared for lots of curiosity about reproduction by finding books and resources before the questions start. When possible, include children in making changes in routine which result from having a pregnant teacher -- and prepare them for the teacher's absence during maternity leave.

Legal Rights of Pregnant Employees

Pregnant workers have the same rights as any other employee. According to the federal Pregnancy Disability Act of 1978, it is illegal for an employer to discriminate against a woman because of pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, any associated medical condition, or absences due to these conditions or their medical complications. Pregnant employees and their dependents may not be denied any fringe benefits or insurance coverage granted to other (non-pregnant) workers. If medical coverage is provided to other employees, the coverage must include maternity coverage and medical complications due to abortion. The catch is: if employers do not provide illness or disability benefits to any employees, then they do not have to give them to pregnant women.

In general, pregnant employees must be offered the benefit of all policies, procedures and practices offered to non-pregnant employees, and may not be made subject to policies, procedures and practices to which other employees are not subject.

It is illegal to make a hiring decision on the basis of a job applicant's pregnancy, unless the prospective employee is not "able to perform the major functions necessary to the job." It is illegal to ask an employee (or job applicant) any questions about their family planning, birth control, child care arrangements, the parentage of their children, or whether they are married to the child's other parent. An employer may ask for advance notice of the date an employee expects to begin her pregnancy leave and how long she estimates the leave will last. An employer may not make an employee take a leave solely because of the stage of her pregnancy.

An employee must inform her employer when she is ready and able to return to the job. The employer must reinstate the employee in her original job, with the same rate of pay, benefits, working conditions and possibilities for promotion, unless that original job is no longer available because of a business necessity. This means there must be no reasonable way the job could have been held open or filled by a temporary worker without jeopardizing the safe and efficient operation of the business. If the job was filled due to a legitimate business necessity, the employer must make a reasonable attempt to place the employee in a position with equal pay and benefits and with similar working conditions and chances for promotion.

If other employees are allowed to take non-work-related, personal leaves of absence, the employer must grant similar personal leaves for infant care if the employees request them. They may not dictate a "waiting period" after childbirth before which the employee may not return to work unless they insist on a similar "waiting period" for all other employees returning to work after an absence due to disability or illness.

If an employee must miss work due to pregnancy-related disabilities (e.g. morning sickness), these absences are considered part of that employee's pregnancy leave. Employers may ask for medical verification of disability due to pregnancy only if they insist on similar verification for other temporary disabilities.

In California, all employees are entitled to a minimum of four month's unpaid leave for disability caused by pregnancy, childbirth or associated medical conditions. If other workers are allowed to take leaves of absence longer than four months, pregnant employees must be allowed equally long absences. During this time, all benefits and seniority continue to accrue as they would for a non-pregnant employee on leave. Employees may use any accumulated paid leave time (sick leave, vacation, paid disability leave, etc.) to cover such absences. With the exception of private-sector employers with less than fifteen employees, employers must grant the same amount of paid leave for pregnancy-related disabilities as they do for other disabilities or illnesses.

The laws relating to pregnant employees vary from state to state and are changing continually. Check with federal and state agencies to keep up with the latest regulations.

In California, non-religious nonprofit employers and private sector employers with five to fourteen employees must provide paid leave for pregnancy-related disabilities if they provide it for workers absent due to other illnesses or disabilities. If the pregnancy is a normal one, they may limit the paid portion of the leave to six weeks even if longer paid leaves are granted for other disabilities. The four-month minimum for pregnancy disability, paid or unpaid, still applies. If the pregnancy is not a normal one, or if there are any medical complications, the paid portion of the leave must be as long as paid disability or sick leave granted to other employees. In this case, an employer may request medical verification of the necessity for more than six weeks' leave.

In most states, pregnant employees not on paid leave are entitled to State Disability Insurance when they must leave work because of pregnancy or childbirth. In order to be assured of receiving the full benefit to which she is entitled, it is important for a worker to get the information about coverage before she is disabled, and to apply for the insurance as soon as possible after the disability begins. Forms and further information are available at the local Employment Development Departments of State Employment Offices.

Questions and Answers About Pregnant Workers' Rights

Q: "An employee quit her job with our center to have her baby. Now, four months later, she wants her old job back. It was filled months ago. Do we have to provide her with an equivalent job or pay into unemployment just because she was pregnant when she quit?"

A: It depends on your state's laws. The Supreme Court has upheld a Missouri law denying unemployment benefits to anyone who "voluntarily" leaves a job, including those who leave because of pregnancy. Individual states are at liberty to mandate preferential treatment for pregnant employees, but they are not compelled to do so.

Q: "My baby is due at the beginning of the center's summer vacation. All of the teachers' contracts end then too, and get renewed again in the fall. Does this mean I'm not entitled to any paid leave or unemployment? Does the center have the right not to renew my contract in the fall?"

A: Your rights are the same as everyone else's. If other teachers are not paid during the summer vacation period, your center is under no special obligation to pay you any wages other than those which you have accrued and not taken. If teachers in your state are not entitled to unemployment benefits during the summer months, neither are you. Your right to be renewed in the fall is also the same as anyone else's. Remember that in most states you are eligible for disability insurance during the time you are unable to work because of your pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. You contribute money to pay for this insurance with each paycheck (the SDI deduction). The amount of the insurance and the duration of its payment under various conditions is determined by the state in which you live.

Q: "I just told my employer that I'm pregnant (I'm three months along). She says they were planning to offer me the assistant director's position when it opens (five months from now), but because I will be eight months pregnant at that time she's sure I won't have the energy the job requires and that they need someone who could be there "100%" for them, including during the time I will have to take a leave to have my baby. I understand her point of view, but I think I can give the job the energy it takes up to the time I have to leave and am willing to return as soon as possible. What's the law here?"

A: To pass you up for promotion on the presumption that you will not be able to do the job because you are pregnant is discriminatory, and illegal. Your rights to a leave of absence are the same as (or in some states, better than) any other worker's.

* Adapted from an article in Child Care Employee News, summer/fall 1986, and from "The Rights of Employees in Early Childhood Education" by Valerie Werstler.

WHEN THE KIDS AT WORK ARE YOURS

Although the majority of child care workers are women of child bearing age, we aren't often seen as parents with child care problems of our own. We are even less likely to be seen as one of the largest occupational groups in the country receiving work-site child care as a job benefit. Yet increasing numbers of child care employees bring their children with them to the center each day, often receiving a substantial reduction in their child care fee. Salary surveys conducted by CCEP indicate that in some communities as many as 50% of centers offer some form of child care benefit to teachers.

Kids at Work

Some centers offer free or discounted child care to their employees as a way to attract and retain staff. If a center is to maintain legal ratios and class size, this benefit can represent a significant economic commitment to meet staff needs. Problems arise, however, in other programs where employees' children are added to groups already functioning at capacity. The "benefit" can become a strain on other staff and children.

Most child care workers with young children welcome child care as a job benefit. How else can parents who work in child care balance low wages with high child care costs? Unfortunately, when offered free or discounted child care as a work benefit, workers may not realize the complicated nature of such an arrangement. Following are some issues to consider:

If you will be bringing your child to work, will s/he be included in the group of children for which you are responsible? If so, it will be important for you to help your child understand that you will have a different relationship at the center than at home. There will be other rules at the center, and s/he will have to accept the attention and time you will be giving to other children. S/he will have to follow not only your rules but the rules set by other adults in the classroom. Be prepared for your child to test the limits of the situation by demanding your help when you are engaged with other children, or by rejecting the comfort or guidance of another teacher.

These issues are manageable but they do require talking about, probably more than once. You may find that the other children in your class, not just your child, will need an opportunity to discuss these issues, too. It is also important to know that you, as the teacher, may be subjected to accusations of favoritism from other parents. Be ready to explain to them how you handle the conflicting demands of the situation.

Will your child be in another teacher's classroom or group? If so, it will be important to establish clear rules and guidelines regarding the child's contact with you during the day. Although it can be heart-wrenching, intervening if your child is crying in the other room will not only confuse your child but will undermine your co-worker's authority. It's a challenge to move between your role as a teacher and your role as a parent. Vulnerable feelings that arise for parents may be inappropriate in a co-worker relationship. Switching back and forth between these roles requires emotional maturity.

How can the center help? If your program offers child care benefits to its employees, it is important to establish policies that address the issues mentioned above. Even under the best of circumstances, problems will arise. When centers provide a probation period for this arrangement, neither the program nor the employee is locked into a situation that may be detrimental. You may find that what is appropriate for one family may not be for another.

It would be useful for your center to create a forum to discuss problems that typically arise when the children of staff are cared for on-site. Non-parent staff may need assistance in how to give sensitive feedback to co-workers about their children. They may also require an opportunity to air resentments that arise from the arrangement, e.g. parent workers taking longer to complete a task because they are involved with their child, or more frequent absences due to a child's illness. Parent workers will often need help learning to be less defensive about their children.

Despite the issues that need to be considered, many teachers who bring their children to work find it invaluable. The financial benefit and the convenience of spending the day in the same place with our children make life much more manageable. This arrangement can ease the tension many working parents experience when they must be away from their children long hours, or leave them in an environment about which they know little. On a personal level, the support of other staff who know and like your child can help through the inevitable ups and downs of the early years.

PROVIDING EXTENDED DAY CARE IN PARENT CO-OPS AND NURSERY SCHOOLS

Traditional parent co-ops and nursery schools operate 3-4 hour morning programs, the former with parent involvement in the program, the latter primarily employing paid teachers and directors. In recent years many of these programs have added a day care or "extended day" program due to the rising costs of operating preschools and co-ops, and the increased number of women with young children who have joined the work force and require additional hours of child care. These extended day programs generally take the form of an early morning (e.g. 7-9 a.m.) and an afternoon (e.g. 12-6 p.m.) extended day program. Meeting parents' needs for increased child care has been an exciting but difficult task for many half-day programs. In this handout we will address the advantages and dilemmas of extended day programs for the teachers who staff them.

Working in an extended day program can be very different from working in a co-op or nursery school program. Extended day staff report that the atmosphere is more relaxed and calm, oriented more toward recreation and forming strong relationships with children than toward developing cognitive skills. This can give teachers a greater degree of choice and autonomy in designing programs and planning curriculum.

Special Stresses That Go with the Job

But extended day staff also face some challenges. Some parents and administrators believe that young children shouldn't be in child care all day, and may be hesitant to approve adequate financial resources for the extended day care program, which then becomes the "poor relation" to the morning program. Because the extended day program differs in atmosphere and purpose from the morning program, extended day staff are not always considered "teachers," resulting in lower pay than the morning staff.

The day care program might be asked not to use certain equipment and supplies, or to restrict the children to particular spaces within the school. The problems and demands of integrating the morning and afternoon programs may also fall to the extended day staff, since theirs is the newer component at the site.

Because extended day staff interact with parents during the most stressful times of their day -- rushing to and from work -- these teachers may hear more than their share of gripes and complaints about the program. They are often blamed for things like lost clothing, sick children and more.

The somewhat erratic yearly schedule of extended day care programs can cause disruption in teachers' personal lives. As one teacher says:

> "Our program operates only after school for most of the year, but changes to full time for holidays and school vacations. This schedule prevents me from getting another part-time job to help support my family."

Suggestions for Change

Work together with morning staff. Working to improve the stresses of your job can be a lonely task, and will be impossible without the support of others. Some of your most natural allies are the staff members of the morning program. Without their support, you will be pitting one program against another when requesting changes, and forcing the parents and board to make choices which imply that one program is "better" or "worthier" than another. Set up a regular time to meet with the morning staff to discuss each group's needs. Perhaps the morning staff is complaining, for example, that they must clean up after the extended day staff at the beginning of each day, and the extended day staff has no place to store their equipment. A possible solution would be for the morning staff to make more storage space available for the afternoon program, with the assurances of the afternoon staff that they will put away their equipment each day.

Communication between staff also ensures that the particular needs and problems of a child are not overlooked, to the child's and parents' distress. The care each child receives will be more consistent if morning and afternoon staff meet to discuss the children and share potential problems and solutions.

Form a support group of morning and afternoon staff, and meet regularly for mutual support and information sharing, to develop negotiating strategies and to discuss working conditions.

Plan a parent education meeting, with the support of morning teachers. Many of the problems facing extended day care staff require changing parent awareness of the similarities and differences between the morning co-op program and the day care component. For example, equipment and supplies often get heavier use in the afternoon due to the higher ratio of children to adults in afternoon programs and the nature of the curriculum. If parents can recognize this, they can anticipate the difference and begin to calculate extra costs of maintenance and replacement in the program budget.

Help parents see that extended day staff deserve recognition and adequate compensation for the skilled work that they do. Invite board members and parents to attend the extended day program, so that they may see first-hand that although the educational focus may not be the same as in the morning program, the children are receiving a structured program based on their developmental needs, not just custodial care.

Establish communication procedures. Work with the board, parents and other staff to determine ways in which parents can refer their feedback or complaints to the appropriate people. In some programs, all "complaints" are directed first to a board member rather than to a teacher. Similar procedures can be established for staff; morning and afternoon teachers can express their concerns to a liaison, if they have reached an impasse when working out a problem.

Request that the board develop a personnel manual, clearly defining the duties and responsibilities of extended day staff. Staff compensation should be arranged for preparation, planning and meeting time. Personnel policies should also establish parity in wages for nursery school, co-op, extended day and other staff in the programs, recognizing that a job title does not always define skills, and that the different schedules of extended day care staff may mean differences in vacation benefits, etc. (See Unit III section, "Writing and Revising Personnel Policies.")

Advocate for better wages and working conditions. Get involved in legislative efforts in your state by joining a child care organization and by writing letters to those who are sponsoring legislation. For more information regarding extended day care and child care working conditions, contact CCEP.

* * *

This article was prepared with the generous assistance of Russ Henry and Nancee Bailey.

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WORKING FOR QUALITY CHILD CARE

An Early Childhood Education Text
from the Child Care Employee Project

UNIT III: MANAGING A QUALITY PROGRAM

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WORKING FOR QUALITY

CHILD CARE

An Early Childhood Education Text
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WORKING FOR QUALITY CHILD CARE

Unit III: Managing a Quality Program

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UNIT III: MANAGING A QUALITY PROGRAM

Introduction

The Child Care Employee Project (CCEP) is a non-profit advocacy organization which has worked since 1977 to improve the wages, status and working conditions of the child care profession. Thousands of child care workers, administrators and parents -- as well as government agencies, policy makers, employers and unions -- have come to CCEP for help on local and national issues affecting the child care workforce.

This text has grown out of a series of popular "handouts" which CCEP developed over the years in response to teachers' requests for practical, on-the-job help.

Unit I, "Teaching in Child Care Today," provides an overview of current issues facing the child care workforce, and highlights some successful strategies for change.

Unit II, "Creating a Better Work Environment," covers federal and Califronia labor laws affecting child care workers; tips for building better relationships with co-workers and parents; and health and safety issues in child care.

Unit III, "Managing a Quality Program," introduces Administration students to the areas of staff salaries and benefits and personnel policies, as well as procedures for evaluating staff, handling grievances, making decisions, hiring substitutes and volunteers, and responding to accusations of child abuse.

The Child Care Employee Project can be reached at P.O. Box 5603, Berkeley, CA 94705; (415) 653-9889.

A. Wages and Benefits

SALARY SCHEDULES

At an early age many of us are taught not to talk about money with others in order to avoid conflict. But if you work in child care, where there are too many demands and too few resources, such evasion isn't helpful or even possible. At CCEP we have learned that most work-related issues are best dealt with by developing clear, written program policies which ensure appropriate expectations and minimize miscommunication. Salary policies are no exception.

A salary plan or schedule can form the basis of a child care program's policy. It is a process of classifying jobs according to their degree of responsibility and difficulty, and establishing a method to give salary increases equitably and consistently.

A clearly defined salary plan enables parents and other concerned community members to see in "black and white" the true financial situation of child care workers. Low wages are linked to two of the most critical problems facing child care today: high staff turnover and the shortage of trained staff. At a time when the demand for good teachers far outweighs the supply, salary plans which realistically reflect the value of the work and the training requirements and which relate positively to those of comparable organizations will go a long way towards attracting and keeping employees.

Creating a Salary Schedule

1. Do a **task analysis** of each job in the program.

Staff input is critical here. All employees should provide a detailed list of the tasks which comprise their job, and the frequency with which they perform each. Include any decision-making responsibilities. These analyses should be reviewed with each staff person to determine whether any duties should be changed.

2. Develop **job descriptions** for each position.

A job description defines a task within the program that needs to be done, not the individual who holds the job. Again, staff input is essential; no one knows a job better than the person who does it. When writing job descriptions, be sure to take into account: a) knowledge and skill required for the job; b) training and experience required; c) degree of responsibility; d) supervision given to others; e) supervision received; f) contact with the public.

3. Establish a **job classification system.**

Next, compare jobs in relation to each other and group them according to difficulty, regardless of dissimilar functions. These groups or "classes" are then ranked in order of their importance to the program. Five to seven classes usually allow for enough diversity without being too cumbersome. It is more manageable to set salary ranges for entire classes than for individual positions in a program. Therefore, each job in a class has the same dollar value as every other job in that class. When ranking classes keep in mind the amount of responsibility, supervision, contact with others and length of training each job demands. (See the sample classification chart at the end of this article.)

The size of the gaps between starting salaries should accurately represent how positions fit into the agency structure. An unreasonable gap (e.g. directors earning twice as much as head teachers) will be reinforced over time if raises are based on percentage (e.g. an annual 7% raise for all staff). People on the lower end may resent the substantially lower dollar amounts of their raises.

On the other hand, if increases are given as fixed amounts (e.g. an annual $200 raise), the ratios will change and the gap will be narrowed, but those who have reached the higher end of the scale may be dissatisfied with annual raises which reflect a lower percentage of their salary than those for staff with less experience, seniority and responsibility. Before you choose the type of increase to be offered, be sure that salary differentials are fair reflections of the nature of the work.

4. Do a **pay survey.**

In order to set salary ranges for the classes you have created, look at other wages in your community to determine what your program will need to offer to be competitive and retain staff. You can do your own informal wage survey by checking the newspapers, telephoning other centers and looking at job announcements at local agencies. There may have been a salary survey completed in your community -- check with your local resource and referral agency or early childhood association.

Beware of using dated information or information from dissimilar communities. Also, be cautious of using the "going rate" as an adequate wage -- the status quo may do you no good if other programs are having difficulty attracting and keeping qualified staff.

5. Establish a **step system** for each classification.

A step system establishes variations in pay (and an upper limit) for each class. The base (or beginning) salary for a position can be offered to an applicant who meets the minimum level of education and experience for the job. A more qualified applicant may be offered the position at a higher salary.

To ensure fairness, limit the maximum number of steps above the base salary which will be offered to new job candidates, no matter how qualified they are. (The maximum may be two or three steps.) In addition, re-examine your program's policy on promoting from within. Perhaps the commitment to offering job advancement to existing staff can be strengthened, giving employees the opportunity to learn new skills and assume greater responsibility without leaving the agency.

Base salaries and raises should be reviewed annually, and adjusted to reflect the changing marketplace, even if the classification system remains the same.

Salary Increases: When and Why?

When. Most salary increases occur annually, although every six months is also possible. What matters most is that all staff members know when to expect a review and/or increase, and that the procedure takes place on time.

Why. Most organizations opt for one of two systems: MERIT or LENGTH OF SERVICE. Some use a combination of both. Each has its pros and cons.

MERIT raises are most often used in the private sector, but can be applied to other settings. Merit systems use financial reward as an incentive to continue good performance and to encourage others to work toward their maximum potential. Theoretically, employees who are performing below par would be denied increases until they improve, and raises would be given periodically only to the deserving.

A merit system demands a lot of attention to effective supervision and feedback. Supervisors need to be well-trained in evaluation, observation and communication. Those who fail to receive raises will justifiably want clear guidance as to how to secure a raise in the future. An employee must be given very specific instructions which will allow his or her improvement to be measurable. Some agencies develop objective criteria, such as promptness, as the basis for merit increases to eliminate potential bad feelings about evaluation.

Performance standards should reflect staff input, and should be understood and accepted by all. As with most systems which rely on human judgment, the evaluation is always open to question.

A system of raises based on LENGTH OF SERVICE is more common in public agencies and would work best in newer programs, or programs which face recurrent funding crises and need predictable budgets year to year. Offering automatic increases (usually one step in a salary range) every 6 or 12 months is based on the premise that the worth of employees increases as they gain skills and knowledge with passing time.

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Some programs find, though, that it is more difficult to weed out unsatisfactory employees with this type of raise system. A comprehensive evaluation system kept separate from raises would be a more effective way to monitor and improve professional growth. Automatic increases assure staff that their value is noted and will be acknowledged in predictable increments at predictable times. In a historically underpaid field such as child care, automatic increases validate the necessity to upgrade salaries for all who work in the field.

Other options include rewards for professional development and cost of living adjustments. Both might best be used to supplement an existing system as described above, rather than as an exclusive means of administering raises. Not every staff member has the opportunity to obtain additional education, regardless of their desire to do so. If additional training is a priority for the position, programs can encourage participation by providing in-service training, release time for classes, or tuition stipends for staff.

Cost-of-living raises are desirable, but staff members relying on them will find that their amount is often unpredictable. This is not a very equitable pay increase system either, as not everyone is equally affected by changes in the cost of living. Programs that wish to respond to the changing economy may either give lump sum awards to staff exclusive of their annual salary increases, or adjust base salaries and corresponding steps to reflect changes in the cost of living.

# # #

Every program will have to determine the type of salary plan and increase system that best fits its needs, as well as appoint one person and/or a committee for establishing, reviewing, maintaining and operating the salary system. Salary information can clarify the true cost of child care, and can help to generate fundraising support to make it more affordable for parents.

HEALTH COVERAGE

Although child care workers are continually exposed to contagious diseases and experience considerable stress in their jobs, many do not receive medical coverage as a job benefit. Furthermore, most workers cannot easily afford to purchase health insurance. Relying on Medicaid to cover in an emergency while neglecting everyday health problems is a risky business, but it is a choice which child care staff must often make.

This article explores some medical coverage alternatives for centers and child care employees.

Individual Plans

Individual plans are those which can be purchased by someone on his/her own. They provide varying amounts of protection: some cover only major illness, others include preventative check-ups, dental care and therapy.

The "pros" are that you don't need to be part of any group, employed full time, or consistently employed to qualify for coverage. The "cons" are that individual plans are often more expensive, and sometimes have less coverage, than group plans. Acceptance by insurance companies often depends on health history and age, and rates can be raised as often as every six months.

To get information on individual plans, call local insurance agents or medical insurance agencies (Kaiser in California and Blue Cross almost anywhere in the country are examples). Private physicians and clinics may also have information. Shop around! Even with individual plans, different companies offer varying coverage for similar payment rates.

Group Plans

This is coverage which requires purchase by a group (usually a minimum of 10 members, but some companies are developing plans for as few as 2 members). Coverage varies greatly among plans.

The "pros" may include "guarantee issue," which means that members with pre-existing illnesses can be covered, and rates are often fixed for a year and may be cheaper than individual plans. The "cons" are that many insurance companies will only accept people who work full-time, and only a few companies will cover professional associations, or "consortiums" of child care agencies.

There are several ways to obtain group coverage:

1. Join an established group. If your workplace is part of a larger agency or is connected to an association, you may be able to join an existing group plan. For example, if your center is affiliated with a church, ask about existing coverage for the minister and other staff. It is often relatively simple to include more people in an on-going policy. Sometimes it is beneficial for an existing group to expand, as rates depend on the size of the group.

2. Form a group. One center may qualify for group coverage on its own. However, given the size of some centers, the group may not be large enough to qualify for the best coverage at the cheapest rates. Several centers, family day care homes, or other agencies can join together to form an association which can then purchase a policy. Such an association can obtain tax-exempt status, and must file an application for recognition of tax exemption (form 1024) and yearly returns (form 990). This option requires organization among the different centers or agencies during the group's formation, and on a continuing basis. A small charge in addition to the premium costs can be levied and paid to one agency, which assumes billing and mailing responsibilities.

3. Use a pre-existing organization. An agency with non-profit status can administer a group plan for specified members of the community. Unions and professional associations representing employees in the same line of work at different workplaces are prime candidates for this option, as are community resource agencies. Those child care workers currently organized in District 65, UAW and AFSCME enjoy extensive medical and dental coverage; NAEYC has established a major medical plan for its members; and United Way offers a group plan for non-profit organizations throughout California.

If the organization's articles of incorporation do not specifically list insurance as one of its services, the full board of directors should vote to include it. Because this is not a money-generating activity (no income in excess of expenses) it has no tax impact on the agency.

The non-profit organization serves as the central office and is billed by the insurance company. A separate account should be maintained for the insurance plan, and a charge can be levied to participants in the plan for staff costs, mailing, etc. One word of warning: the staff person or agency handling the insurance billing can easily become an information source about insurance, so be prepared for frequent telephone calls.

After a Group is Organized

One or more people should start investigating group policy options. Since this may take extensive energy and time, it is a good idea for these people exploring policies to be given release time from their regular jobs, or be paid.

1. Find and work with several agents. Talk to more than one insurance agent, and consider the following questions for each one:

- Is s/he interested in learning about the particular constraints facing child care workers?
- Is s/he willing to work with associations or consortiums of people?
- Can s/he help you with tax-related and fringe-benefit questions?
- Does s/he know the full range of what is available or is s/he committed to particular companies?
- Will s/he do research on areas such as out-patient therapy coverage and coverage for part-time workers?

Don't be afraid to ask questions, and remember that it is legal and legitimate to negotiate with several agents or brokers at the same time.

2. Obtain a group profile. When you begin working with agents you will be asked for a census of members -- name, age, sex, dependent coverage needed, hours of work, existing illnesses, etc. This information is necessary to determine the best coverage for the entire group and the cost of the premiums. Because insurance rates are based on the average age of a group rather than on specific age brackets, some agents can't give you actual rates until they know who will participate. This can lead to a "catch 22": you can't get a cost quote until you know the committed participants, and potential participants can't commit themselves until they know the amount of the premiums. Don't despair. There are companies who will be willing to offer an initial premium rate based on a general group profile. The premium can be adjusted after a few months if necessary.

3. Consider policies. Be sure to read the terms of different policies, and ask questions about each one:

- What is the actual coverage?
- What is excluded in the coverage (e.g. preventative check-ups, therapy)?
- What is the premium? For how long is it fixed?
- How often do premiums have to be paid? (Monthly or quarterly?)

- Can pay periods for premiums be negotiated if they are not convenient?

- How much is the yearly deductible? (Frequently a cheaper premium will be accompanied by a higher deductible.)

- How are claims processed?

- Will the company pay doctor's fees directly? How soon after a claim is submitted?

- How soon are members reimbursed for expenses?

Don't hesitate to withdraw from a negotiation with an agent if you find the contract on a policy does not state exactly what was promised verbally.

Alternatives to Regular Medical Insurance Coverage

One alternative to regular insurance is a "health fund." This is a budgeted amount of money which the employer establishes per year per employee (e.g. $1,000) and which can be used for health related services. Depending on the center's tax status and funding source, unexpended funds may or may not be carried over to the following year's budget.

The fund can be an excellent way to supplement an existing health insurance benefit or to provide some coverage if a center cannot afford to cover total insurance costs. An additional "pro" for this alternative is that employees can choose where to spend health fund money (e.g. for eyeglasses, therapy with a state licensed therapist, etc.).

A "con" is that the employee must "front" the money and then be reimbursed. Bookkeeping is also a little more complicated than for one-time payments to an insurance company. Also, if a "health fund" is the only form of health coverage, employees will not be covered for major illnesses or medical expenses.

Health Coverage as a "Fringe Benefit"

Whatever portion the employer pays into an individual plan, a group plan, or a health fund is considered a fringe benefit for the employee.

The employee is not taxed on the fringe benefit, and if s/he pays for part of a premium, all or part of it may be listed as a deductible medical expense on an itemized tax return.

Those employers who pay business taxes can claim that portion of the premium payment (whether it is 5%, 50% or 100%) as a deductible business expense.

Consult an accountant or the Internal Revenue Service for the specific regulations covering your situation.

Premium Payments

Although child care workers ideally deserve coverage paid in full by their employers, a first step may be to ask for an employer contribution toward some portion of the premium, whether it is a group or individual plan. Then perhaps each time the budget is discussed or staff pay negotiations are initiated, the amount of the employer's contribution to health insurance can be raised until the day when this "fringe benefit" is fully covered for all. Offering health benefits is one step toward providing child care staff with the respect and security they deserve.

NOTE: If you are aware of other creative health coverage options, please write to the Child Care Employee Project, P.O. Box 5603, Berkeley, CA 94705, and we'll share your ideas in our newsletter, the Child Care Employee News.

PENSIONS

"Retirement? No, not me -- I'm too young to think about it yet!"

"Retirement? Well, I'll just have to depend on Social Security."

"Retirement? I can barely get by now, much less put anything away for the future!"

Where will you be in 20, 30, 40 years? After a long career caring for children, you'll certainly be ready to retire. But on what? A California AEYC membership survey completed in 1983 confirmed what CCEP has found in other surveys: 80% or more of child care workers receive no retirement benefits. This is not surprising, considering that most child care workers are women, and half of all women workers have no pensions. The situation is more pronounced in child care because of inadequate funding, a relatively young work force, constant turnover and competing priorities.

Do we need retirement plans? Because we need other, important short-term benefits we tend to overlook planning for the future. But a look at the present-day circumstances of retired women can help us understand the importance of planning for retirement. The average single woman retires with less than $1,000 in the bank. Women run a disproportionate risk of being poor at various stages of their lives. They comprise a large part of the "working poor," and become a larger part of the "poor elderly." About 75% of the aged poor are women. This percentage can be attributed in part to greater life expectancy, traditional lack of participation in the work force, and the fact that fewer than 10% of widows receive their spouse's retirement benefits. Perhaps more relevant, though, is the fact that this figure reflects the low wages women receive while they are working: after age 40, women earn about 55% of what men earn. Low wages prevent building a savings account and spell low retirement benefits in the future.

Considering the low wages of child care staff, how can we afford to even think about retirement benefits? In answer, the majority of women over 65 in this country receive $373 a month in Social Security benefits, the major portion of their retirement income. Given this, can we afford not to consider retirement as part of the benefits we deserve?

What types of plans are available?

Many retirement plans operate on the principle that both the employer and employee make contributions to the individual's plan, each paying a certain negotiated percentage of the employee's salary. After a certain period the employee comes to have a "vested" right in the contributions, meaning that s/he has full ownership of the money contributed by the employer. Upon retirement, the employee will receive payments of the money and/or interest that has accrued. These payments supplement any other income received after retirement.

Some retirement plans provide a "defined benefit," meaning that the benefit on retirement is based on a percentage of the average pay of the individual during her/his last five or ten years of active employment, or a similar formula. Some are "defined contribution" plans, in which the benefit is based on the amount contributed for the individual over the years. This latter type of plan costs less, and takes less money to start up. Because there is no minimum contribution needed to initiate them, "defined contribution" retirement plans can be appropriate for limited child care center budgets.

The following two options are well-suited to small non-profit organizations:

A simplified employee pension (SEP) allows an employer to contribute annually up to 15% of a worker's salary to an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) for that employee. The funds in this account immediately belong to the employee, and s/he can make additional contributions to the SEP of up to $2,000 per year. The employer's contribution is tax deductible, and the employee is not taxed on the SEP until withdrawal of the funds at retirement. (SEP's can be invested just like IRA's.) An employer must include all employees who are eligible (the Internal Revenue Service has a specific formula for this), and must contribute the same salary percentage for each employee. The employer is not required to make a contribution every year --a possible advantage in the child care world of roller-coaster budgets.

In a 403(b) savings plan, also known as a tax-sheltered annuity, a tax-deferred annuity or a salary reduction plan, the employee has a tax-exempt amount deducted each month from her paycheck. The employer can match the employee's contribution. Employees participating in such a plan can still have their own IRA. If the employee leaves the job, s/he can roll-over what has accumulated in this plan to an IRA, or can leave the amount intact; but in the latter case, no more contributions can be made to the original account. S/he could also withdraw the funds, but they would be taxed as regular income. These plans are usually administered by life insurance companies or mutual funds.

If your program cannot afford to offer any retirement plans for employees, you may choose to open an IRA yourself. You will be able to contribute a certain percentage of your income to this account each year and earn interest on it, and it will not be taxed until used as retirement income. Those working for self-employed persons may be able to participate in their employer's Keogh plan, which is similar to an IRA.

If your spouse has a retirement plan, you can investigate the possibility of a "survivor option" for that plan. This would reduce the benefits your spouse would get on retirement, but in the event of her/his death, you would receive a portion of the pension.

Questions to Consider About Pension Plans

Q. What is the waiting period before you can participate in the plan? How much will you and your agency contribute? How are your contributions figured (weekly, monthly)? Will time worked for other employers count toward your "term of service"? How will leaves of absence affect your benefits? What will your contributions add up to over time? Can you transfer the plan if you switch jobs?

Q. What is the waiting period until you have a "vested" right to the money? Can you take your money out of the plan before retirement? What happens to your contribution if your employer stops paying into the plan, or if you leave the job before retirement, retire early, become disabled, or die? If you work past the age of 65, will your employer continue to make contributions?

Q. When will benefits begin to be paid, and how? What will the benefit be based on? If you die, will your spouse receive any benefits? How will contributions be invested? How much risk is involved?

Resources

The Women's Pension Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the pension rights of workers and their families, can provide more information about these and other types of retirement plans. The Project publishes resources and provides technical assistance and referrals to individuals and groups on many pension issues. It also has information about the federal Retirement Equity Act, which lowers the age when workers can participate in pension plans, eliminates any penalty for taking maternity leave and increases protection for employees when their employer terminates or amends a pension plan. For more information, contact the Project at 918 16th St. NW, Suite 704, Washington, D.C. 20006, (202) 296-3778.

A reputable group insurance broker can advise you and work with you to develop a plan to meet the needs of your program. Information about IRA's and Keoghs can be obtained from most savings and loan institutions. Two insurance companies offer pension plans designed specifically for non-profit programs: Mutual of America (formerly the National Health and Welfare Mutual Life Insurance Association), 666 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10103; (212) 399-1600; and Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association, 730 Third Ave., New York, NY 10017; (212) 490-9000.

PAYROLL TAXES

Like other employees, child care workers are subject to federal and state payroll taxes. Some taxes are withheld from workers' paychecks; others are paid by employers. Employers are responsible for determining how much to withhold and pay, and for turning the tax money over to the various federal and state agencies. This handout covers the various taxes which you and your employer are required to pay. The information can help employees understand the difference between their gross and net pay, and hopefully protect them against unexpected taxes in April. It may also be useful for directors who want help in explaining some of the constraints on the center's budget.

This handout was written with specific reference to federal and California regulations. If you live outside of California, check with your State Tax Board for state provisions which affect you.

Who is subject to payroll taxes?

Almost all employees are; independent contractors are not. Almost everyone who works for another person, or for an entity such as a corporation, is an employee (even substitutes and temporary workers, in most cases). An independent contractor is self-employed. (Workers who are not U.S. citizens are generally subject to payroll taxes, regardless of their immigration status or their ability to receive a tax refund.)

Some child care employers pay their employees as if they were independent contractors. They may do this to avoid the expense of payroll taxes, or the nuisance of bookkeeping and paperwork. Employers who do this are risking legal penalties. Some workers prefer to be treated as independent contractors because they get more take-home pay. Beware. These workers still have to pay income and social security taxes at the end of the year, and they may be penalized for having an insufficient amount of pay withheld. In addition, if workers and their employers do not pay various other payroll taxes, such as state disability tax and unemployment insurance, the workers won't be eligible for the benefits which these taxes support.

What money is taxed?

An employee's wages are taxed, including regular pay, overtime pay, sick pay, vacation pay and bonuses. Wages do not include fringe benefits such as health or life insurance. For the purposes of federal payroll taxes, the value of employer-provided child care is not included in wages. (State payroll taxes differ on this.)

What taxes are withheld?

In California, four payroll taxes are withheld from most employees' paychecks: federal income tax, California income tax, federal social security tax (FICA) and California state disability insurance (SDI). Employers and employees pay equal shares of social security tax. The cost of state disability is deducted from the employee's wages. Employees pay federal and state unemployment insurance. Employers also pay private insurance companies for workers' compensation insurance, but this is not technically a "tax."

How is income tax withholding computed?

Each employee fills out a Form W-4, "Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate," when s/he starts work. This form includes the employee's marital status and the number of withholding allowances, or exemptions, the employee is claiming. An employee may claim one exemption for her/himself, one exemption for a non-working spouse, and one exemption for each of her/his children or other dependents. Married employees should make sure that only one spouse claims an exemption for each of the couple's children or other dependents.

The more exemptions an employee claims, the less income tax is withheld from the employee's pay. Employees who itemize deductions on their federal income tax returns or who claim a child care or other tax credit, or who qualify for income averaging, may be entitled to claim an extra withholding allowance on Form W-4. This is explained on Form W-4.

The federal Internal Revenue Service (in California: IRS, Box 5045, Fresno, CA 93888) and local State Tax Boards publish withholding tables that tell employers how much income tax to withhold. Sometimes the amount of income tax that an employer withholds is insufficient to cover the employee's actual income tax liability, and the employee will owe the government money with her/his annual income tax return. If the employee ends up owing more than 20% of her/his total tax for the year, the employee may be required to pay an underpayment penalty.

Insufficient income tax withholding can occur when an employee has income in addition to her/his pay, such as interest on savings, gains from a sale of real estate, spouse's wages, etc. (Because tax tables are designed for single-income families, two-income couples often have too little income tax withheld. An employee with a working spouse may want to increase the amount withheld from her/his pay by checking the box on the Form W-4 marked "Married, but withhold at higher single rate.") An employee who expects to owe income tax at the end of the year can ask her/his employer to withhold an additional dollar amount from each of her/his paychecks, or she can pay quarterly estimated tax payments. (For more information, see IRS Pub. 505.)

Exemption from withholding

An employee is allowed to claim exemption from income tax withholding (by checking the appropriate box on the Form W-4) if her/his federal income tax liability for the prior year was $0 and s/he expects to have a liability of $0 for the current year. Exemption from income tax withholding does not mean exemption from other payroll taxes.

Changing a Form W-4

If an employee's number of withholding allowances decreases, s/he must give her/his employer a revised Form W-4 within 10 days. If an employee's number of withholding allowances increases, s/he may give her/his employer a revised W-4 at any time. Although the effect of the new W-4 may be to decrease the amount of tax withheld from the employee's paycheck, the employer is not required to make this change immediately, and the change may not be reflected until a month or two later.

If an employee claims more than 9 withholding allowances or earns more than $200 a week and claims to be exempt from withholding, the employer must send a copy of the Form W-4 to the IRS. The IRS may then send the employee a verification form to complete.

What is an earned income credit?

Employees who are low-income parents may be able to claim a federal income tax credit called the earned income credit. The earned income credit is refundable. For instance, if an employee has a $200 income tax liability and claims a $500 earned income credit, her/his tax liability will be reduced to $0 and the IRS will send her/him a check for $300 after s/he files her/his tax return.

An employee who expects to be eligible to claim the earned income credit when s/he files her/his income tax return can claim advance payment of the credit instead. This means more take-home pay during the year. To do this, an employee should complete IRS Form W-5 and give it to her/his employer.

What is social security tax (FICA)?

The social security system provides various benefits to workers and their families. Eligibility for these benefits is based on a worker's wage record, which shows the amount of earnings for each year on which social security tax was paid. To find out the amount of earnings that have been credited to her wage record, an employee may file a "Request for Social Security Statement of Earnings" form at the Social Security Administration office.

Before 1983, employees who worked for tax-exempt non-profit organizations or for the federal government were not required to pay social security tax. Now all employees of non-profit organizations, and all federal government employees hired after 1982, are subject to this tax.

What is state disability insurance (SDI)?

In California, state disability insurance provides payments to covered workers who are unable to work due to illness or injury. (The cause need not be related to the worker's job.) This includes benefits to those unable to work due to pregnancy or childbirth. A worker is covered by SDI if s/he has earned at least $300 of wages on which SDI tax was paid, during a one-year period prior to the illness or injury. Employees of certain tax-exempt non-profit organizations and many state and local government employees are exempt from SDI tax. However, some of these employees can elect to pay state disability insurance tax voluntarily and thus be covered by state disability insurance.

What are unemployment taxes?

Federal unemployment tax (FUTA), together with state unemployment tax, provides payments to covered workers who have lost their jobs. These taxes are not withheld from workers' pay; employers pay them.

Special payroll tax rules for domestic workers

Domestic workers are workers who are employed in private homes and who perform household services, including babysitting and housekeeping. Domestic workers' pay is not subject to federal or California income tax withholding. However, a domestic worker and her/his employer may enter into a voluntary withholding agreement. Domestic workers who do not have income tax withheld may be required to make estimated tax payments.

(For more information see IRS Pub. 505, and "Parent Created Child Care Shares," from BANANAS, 6501 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA 94609.)

Domestic workers are subject to federal social security tax (FICA) if they are paid at least $50 in a calendar quarter. If the employer paid $1,000 or more for domestic services in any calendar quarter in the current or previous year, s/he must pay federal unemployment tax, California unemployment tax and California state disability insurance tax. (For more information, see IRS publication #15.)

FOR MORE INFORMATION . . .

Write to the **Child Care Employee Project**, P.O. Box 5603, Berkeley, CA 94705 or contact the **Internal Revenue Service** regarding federal income tax withholding, FICA and FUTA; the state **Franchise Tax Board**, 1912 I St., Sacramento, CA 95814 regarding California income tax withholding; or the state **Employment Development Department** for information on unemployment tax and SDI. The following are free publications which may be helpful to obtain:

IRS Publications

# 15: Circular E - Employer's Tax Guide
# 17: Your Federal Income Tax
#501: Exemptions: Standard Deductions
#503: Child and Disabled Dependent Care Credit
#505: Tax Withholding and Estimated Tax
#539: Employment Taxes
#596: Earned Income Credit

EDD Publications

DE 4525: Employer's Guide: Unemployment Insurance Code of California
DE 44: Employer's Tax Guide

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B. Program Policies and Procedures

WRITING AND REVISING PERSONNEL POLICIES

Aside from a paycheck, the most important document at your work place may be your program's personnel policies. Ideally, these policies describe and clarify the responsibilities and rights of staff and the procedures for dealing with usual and unusual employment issues.

A quick review of a program's personnel policies can give you an idea of what is expected of employees, and how potential (and real) conflicts are resolved. Because each child care environment is unique in terms of purpose, staffing, clientele, budget, etc., each program's personnel policies will differ. However, every work environment can benefit from a clear set of written policies. Contracts are based on information in the personnel policies. Other documents such as statements of goals and objectives, operations manuals, parent policies and job descriptions all complement personnel policies and make a complete set of guidelines for staff, administration and families.

At CCEP, calls about personnel policies are second only to those about salaries. Some calls are from directors who want to develop or upgrade a policy because they have just encountered a problem for which they lack guidelines. Other calls come from staff who want to understand their rights or need to know how to influence decisions made in their centers.

When people begin to examine their personnel policies they often get overwhelmed. Having borrowed sample policies from other centers, many find that the guidelines are not applicable to their situation. Buried in a myriad of papers and suggestions, the personnel policies may never get revised or even written.

There is no easy solution to this problem. Personnel policies have to be adapted to the particular needs of each work place. This article can help you in the process. It examines four aspects of personnel policy development and revision: approaches to the task at hand, what should be included in the policies, using language which reflects a positive approach to the issues involved, and a suggested format.

Tackling the (Seemingly) Impossible

Step one in writing or revising policies is to ascertain who is responsible for the process and who has input. Ideally, policy development and writing should include as much staff input as possible. If this is not the case in your program, begin the process with co-workers by approaching the director or board about gaining input. Try to initiate a discussion of policies before a problem arises. Revising policies is a slow and detailed process, and it is best to avoid making changes in a crisis situation.

Discussing personnel policies is an ideal topic for a series of staff meetings. Recognize that revising or writing policies will take several weeks or even months. Given the limited time allotted in most centers for meetings and the competing issues to discuss, develop realistic expectations for the task you are undertaking.

Break the process into small components based on the areas suggested below or others you may think of. Decide which one (or two at the most) areas to discuss at a sitting. Don't be surprised if some topics, like sick leave or breaks, take more than one meeting to finalize. Assigning people different areas and letting them collect sample policies or resources is a good idea.

What to Include; Using Positive Language

The following is a list of general areas which personnel policies should cover, in the form of questions which may be raised in a group discussion or by an individual reviewing existing policies. Alongside these questions are examples of the types of policies which can be written to meet staff needs. These examples are drawn from actual samples of policies in the CCEP resource files. They reflect positive resolutions to common conflicts and situations found in many child care programs. The questions and examples are not meant to be all-encompassing, but are designed to provoke thought and discussion. (A more structured outline for personnel policies is included at the end of this handout.)

Preamble: What is the purpose of the policies? To whom do they apply? What supplementary documents are available to clarify personnel policies (such as by-laws, contracts, job descriptions, etc.)?

"The purpose of this manual is to better insure the quality of care provided at XYZ Center while providing the best possible working conditions for staff."

"There shall be written job descriptions on file for every position in the agency."

Definition of Employee Categories: Who is considered permanent? Temporary? Consultant? Part-time? Full-time? Who will be given a contract?

"Full-time employees are those who work 35 hours a week or more and are paid a designated amount a year."

"Consultants are hourly employees who work primarily off-site on specific projects with little supervision."

"When hired, an employee is on 'probation' for 3 months, during which time a written evaluation will be completed by both the director and employee. At the end of 3 months, the director will determine if the employee is given permanent status."

"A permanent employee receives a one year contract, beginning at the end of her/his probation period."

Hours of Work: What constitutes overtime? Do you get compensatory time for overtime worked? Are there expectations for staff to volunteer hours? Are staff paid for preparation time, in-service, meeting and conference time, or for events that are outside of normal working hours (field trips, picnics, etc.)?

"In accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, for each 1 hour of overtime worked, the employee may take 1 hour off of work time within the same work week that overtime occurred, or 1 hours off during the same pay period."

"Employees will be paid 1 hour's salary for each staff meeting and in-service session attended."

"Employee attendance is required at all program fund raising activities with a maximum of 3 hours per month, non-cumulative. These hours may be used as earned compensatory time."

Breaks and Meal Periods: Will meals be eaten with the children? Will staff get any meal times off? Paid? Is there any "burnout" relief, such as tasks done away from the children?

"In accordance with state regulations, each employee is allowed a 10 minute break for every 4 hours worked."

"Employees can agree to eat lunch with the children 1 day per week on a rotating basis. Staff will be paid for this hour."

Sick Leave: At what point can staff start using sick leave? Does the policy consider the fact that workers are often sick at the beginning of a new job with children? Is sick leave cumulative over the years? How and to whom should staff report illness? Is there a substitute policy? Can staff use sick days as "mental health" days?

"All employees accumulate 1 sick day per month beginning at the date of hire, from year to year, until a maximum of 45 days is reached. Unused sick leave cannot be converted to cash payments when the employee leaves the program."

"Employees can use their sick day per month as a 'well' day, by giving the director 1 week's notice. Use of this time is subtracted from the employee's accrued sick leave."

"Staff not reporting to work must contact the director as soon as possible, allowing reasonable time to secure a substitute. The director will have the primary responsibility for arranging substitute coverage and maintaining a current substitute list."

Vacation: How will staff request vacation time? Who must approve the request? How much notice must be given? What happens if a staff member becomes ill while on vacation -- can s/he utilize sick leave? Is unused vacation time paid to a departing staff member? How much vacation time can be accrued through the years? How do leaves of absence relate to vacation benefits?

"Full-time permanent employees each receive 1 day per month vacation, beginning at the date of hire. These employees may take up to 12 days of vacation a year, beginning after the first 6 months of permanent status; 15 days a year after 1 years of permanent status. Vacations should be scheduled at a mutually convenient time for the employee and the director. Vacation time may be carried over from year to year, until a maximum of 30 days vacation has been accrued."

"Employees on probation may not take vacation time, but earn days at the rate of 1 day per month to be applied retroactively after they become permanent employees."

"Permanent employees will be compensated for unused vacation time upon leaving the program."

Holidays: What holidays will be paid days off? If a holiday falls on a weekend day, will staff get time off? If a holiday falls on a staff member's day off, can that person take time off some other time?

"All staff will be paid for legal holidays occurring on days when the program is normally in operation."

Leaves of Absence: What constitutes a leave of absence? Will staff accrue benefits during leaves? Can staff utilize other benefits during leaves? Will a job be held for a staff member on leave? Must it be at the same position and salary?

"A leave of absence of up to 5 working days may be taken with pay for a death or serious illness in the immediate family or of a significant other."

"A leave of absence of up to 10 working days may be taken without pay for illness in the family or of a significant other, personal illness, work or study related to your job."

Wages: What are the salary ranges and ceilings? What policies will detail merit and cost of living raises? What benefits may be increased in lieu of salary raises? Will there be differentials for seniority? What is the payment schedule for wages?

"All salaries are commensurate with the prevailing rate in the community for similar positions, but based on the yearly budget of the center."

"Raises will be determined once yearly, at the beginning of the new fiscal year, based on a satisfactory evaluation. All raises will be in 1 step increments, based on the salary scale established for the employee's position."

Evaluations: Who will be evaluated, by whom, and how often? Will all staff have the opportunity to give feedback to co-workers and supervisors? What will be the relationship between evaluations and continued employment and raises?

"Director/staff evaluations will be conducted at 6 month intervals for the purposes of professional growth and development. Separate job performance checklists will be used once yearly to determine satisfactory performance for a salary increase."

Benefits: What benefits will be offered? Who is eligible to receive benefits?

"All employees are covered by Social Security, Worker's Compensation and State Unemployment Insurance, with the exception of independent consultants. In addition, all full-time permanent employees will be given health insurance benefits. Part-time employees will receive health benefits on a pro-rated basis."

"Employees can receive up to 3 days per year release time, with pay, to participate in approved job-related training."

"The program offers reimbursement of up to $200 per year for each permanent employee to cover medical and dental expenses not covered by the employee's health insurance plan."

Work Schedules, Hiring, Firing & Layoffs: What types of prior notice are required when changing staff work schedules? Who will determine layoffs, fill vacancies, reduce hours, etc.? How much notice is required for termination or resignation?

What are the conditions for immediate dismissal? What are the conditions for being placed on probation?

"The director may change an employee's work schedule by giving her/him 72 hours verbal notice."

"Consideration for all job vacancies will be given first to qualified staff who have achieved permanent status."

"The Board of Directors interviews candidates and hires the director. The director and a staff representative will interview and select staff, with equal decision-making input. The Board has final approval on all hiring."

"All permanent employees will be given 10 days written notice in the event of termination, 15 days notice in the event of layoff. The director has the right to terminate staff, but the employee may appeal the decision to the Board of Directors."

"Employees may be terminated immediately, with no notice, if they abuse a child, falsify information, violate licensing regulations, or violate confidentiality."

Grievance Procedures: What steps can an employee take when s/he has a grievance? Are there time limits on the steps? How will the organization be governed and who will have input into major decisions?

(See section, "Grievance Procedures," for suggestions on establishing grievance procedures.)

# # #

For information on your rights under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, look in your phone book's U.S. Government listings under the Labor Department, Wage and Hour Division. To learn more about your state's provisions, call your state Labor Department for information. (Also, see Unit II for information on the Fair Labor Standards Act.)

In order for policies to be useful, they need to be distributed, read and understood by each staff member. (Employees should sign a statement that they have read and understood the policies, in order to protect themselves and the program.) Copies of the policies should be made available to interested parents.

Some components of personnel policies (such as breaks and overtime) may not be open to discussion, but are mandated by state or federal law. To avoid confusion, it's helpful to note where this is true in the policies themselves.

Finally, as the purpose of the policies is to guide and protect staff and the program, and as they will often be used to settle conflicts or substantiate actions, be sure that they adhere to basic legal employment requirements. If your program has access to an attorney, ask her/him to look over the final draft of the policies before you adopt them.

# # #

Personnel policies provide a very legitimate and structured way to raise the issue of working conditions at your program. Policies can communicate support for the work that you do and can stand as an administrative testimony to maintaining a fair and responsive work environment. Far from being a meaningless document, policies do make a difference in validating the precept that employees should not have to sacrifice their rights, benefits and health to their jobs.

CCEP has many resources and samples of policies created specifically for child care environments. We welcome any requests for information or assistance and encourage you to send us copies of your program's personnel policies to add to our resource files. Your program's anonymity will be maintained. CCEP also has articles on many of the topics covered in personnel policies. Write for a publication list to: CCEP, P.O. Box 5603, Berkeley, CA 94705, (415) 653-9889.

# # #

This article was written with the generous assistance of the BANANAS Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, Carol Stevenson of the Child Care Law Center, and the Minneapolis Child Care Workers Alliance.

SAMPLE OUTLINE
FOR PERSONNEL POLICIES

This outline is adapted from the resource book, Day Care Personnel Management, by Nancy Travis and Joe Perreault, Southern Regional Education Board, 130 Sixth St. NW, Atlanta, GA 30313.

I. Introduction

- A. philosophy of the center towards employees
- B. purpose of the policies
- C. to whom the policies apply
- D. supplementary documents available

II. Process to Establish and Amend Policies

- A. how changes are initiated and completed
- B. who can make suggestions, create policy, approve amendments
- C. schedule for review and discussion of policies

III. Employment/Employee Status

- A. definitions of categories, classifications, qualifications
- B. definition of status
    1. time frames for each
    2. conditions of status (i.e. evaluation)
    3. length of contracts
- C. equal opportunity employer statement
- D. process by which vacancies are filled
    1. policy for internal hiring/promotion
    2. authority to fill/create vacancies
- E. resignation/termination procedures
    1. required format/length of notice
    2. authority to terminate staff
    3. grounds for dismissal
    4. grounds for immediate dismissal
    5. disciplinary procedures
    6. grievance/appeal procedures for staff
- F. retirement policy

IV. Hours of Work

- A. length/schedule of work day/week
- B. yearly calendar for center/holiday pay
- C. overtime/comp time policy
- D. meeting, in-service, preparation time schedule/pay requirements
- E. breaks/meal policy
- F. modification of work schedule
- G. volunteer hours
- H. documenting hours worked
- I. any additional employment requirements

V. Salary Plan/Benefits

- A. base determination of salaries
- B. conditions/schedules for salary increases
- C. salary ranges/ceilings
- D. fringe benefits

VI. Attendance/Leave

- A. lateness policy
- B. vacation policy
- C. absenteeism/sick leave
- D. leaves of absence
- E. maternity/paternity policy

VII. Evaluation Procedures

VIII. Personnel Records

IX. Employee Resources

IMPROVING EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Many staff and directors approach evaluation with dread. Staff may feel that their raises or promotions will be threatened by a process they judge to be subjective or unfair. Directors may feel that there is little benefit gained from this time-consuming, often tension-producing process. Ultimately, many employees endure evaluation without enthusiasm, and many directors avoid it altogether.

But staff evaluation can be a satisfying, constructive, educational process for everyone involved. When done properly, it is an opportunity for self-assessment and growth. All too often, however, evaluations are performed with little input from staff, who therefore become resentful and wary. When staff have a hand in designing and implementing evaluation procedures, they become a part, not a victim, of the process.

Think about what you would like to get out of an evaluation. The best gains can be in examining your own strengths, weaknesses and options for improvement. Your director's or other co-workers' feedback can show you how others see your work, how it meets the needs of the center, and how you can improve with the help of the director and other resources. Evaluations should also highlight what is positive about your work.

Barriers

For any changes to be useful, it is helpful to know what it is about evaluation that makes people uncomfortable, and modify policies to minimize that discomfort. Negative feelings may be based on past experiences where feedback meant hostile criticism. Some common reactions are:

- Fear of facing one's inadequacy: "I know I'm not perfect, but I don't like to admit it to myself, much less have others focus on it."
- Shame: "I don't want to think about how I may disappoint children, parents or co-workers."
- Resentment about being judged: "The director doesn't appreciate me and the pressures I am under. She never listens to my feedback, so why should I listen to hers?"
- Fear of additional responsibilities: "I'm doing the best I can and I'm already overworked. Why should I do more without receiving more reward?"

- Skepticism about the consequences: "Nothing ever changes no matter how much we talk about it. Last time people were evaluated, two staff ended up leaving."

An atmosphere of trust and open communication is essential; in order to change traditional evaluation procedures, these emotions must be recognized and addressed by staff and directors. When people feel appreciated and accepted for who they are, they are more open to considering their shortcomings and less defensive about trying new approaches.

Suggestions for Change

- Discuss present evaluation policies with your co-workers. You may find that they see room for improvement, too. Request that a staff meeting be set aside for the group to make concrete suggestions and air negative feelings about evaluation to the director in a legitimate way.

- Clarify the exact consequences of the process. For example, will it affect pay increases, promotions, letters of reference, etc.? Ideally, evaluations for salary increases should be kept separate from assessment for staff growth and development. In some centers a simple checklist is kept of behaviors necessary for receiving raises (e.g. being on time, taking coursework, etc.). Monetary rewards are then based on easily observed behaviors, and evaluation is reserved for in-depth discussion of professional growth.

- Insist on absolute confidentiality during the process.

- Initiate a mechanism to give your director feedback. Most staff have no way to give directors positive or negative feedback. Ideally, evaluation should be a mutual process. Directors may fear this will mean giving up authority, but they can benefit as much as anyone else from learning how others perceive their performance.

- Use written forms for evaluation. This can make the process more comfortable for everyone. Forms provide a framework from which to conduct an evaluation and can minimize misunderstandings. They can give you a good place to start by helping clarify your thoughts and responses. Additionally, if a director is open to being evaluated by staff, written forms facilitate direct feedback which may be difficult to deliver face to face to "the boss."

- Evaluation forms should parallel job descriptions. During evaluation, your performance can be checked against what is expected of you.

- Include additional items which are not on the job description. Some items, like organization, attention to detail, sense of priorities, etc., are not often listed on a job description. These should be included on an evaluation form with specific definitions in terms of the employee's responsibilities in these areas. When employees help design job descriptions and evaluation forms, there are fewer chances of misunderstandings between them and the director.

Once the tools of the evaluation have been discussed and designed, it is equally important to take a look at how they will be used.

- Know what to expect. Employees should know when to expect an evaluation, what procedures will be used and what the consequences will be.

- Fill out the forms first. By filling out the same form that your director is using, you will both be using similar language and criteria to discuss your performance. Filling it out prior to an evaluation conference gives you a chance to do a thorough self-assessment and allows you to be prepared to discuss your work. A self-identified need for improvement is easier to face and work with than one identified by someone else. Request at least one hour of release time to fill out the form and give it careful thought.

- Set aside sufficient time for the evaluation conference, and choose a neutral, pleasant place. Don't discuss other topics. If the staff person shares her self-evaluation first, this may prevent the director from raising all the "problems," and may make the conference more comfortable. Both parties should base their comments on specific observations and examples, not on gut "feelings" alone.

- Make follow-up plans. After your performance has been discussed, work with the director to identify which areas need more attention for improvement. Clearly outline desired goals and behaviors in each area, and what assistance the employee can expect to receive to meet these goals. If any probationary period or deadline is established, it should be specific and clear. Before the conference ends, set up a time to meet again to follow through on any improvements, or just to "check in."

- Talk about what you've done. If your center is in the midst of changing evaluation policies or procedures, the staff and director should meet again to determine whether the changes have been useful. Like most complex processes, evaluation procedures may need some "fine tuning" before everyone feels satisfied.

Depending on the atmosphere in your center, suggesting and implementing changes in personnel procedures may be simple or extremely difficult. There is no doubt that the effort is worth it. Good and frequent evaluation procedures can protect you from arbitrary appraisal of your performance. They let you know just what is expected of you and help make sure that what you do well is not overlooked. Evaluation conferences can identify problems early, before they become major issues which interfere with your work and the operation of the center. Finally, by entering into the process of evaluation, you become a more active participant in mutual problem-solving, and more involved in the decisions which affect your work.

* * *

This article was prepared with the generous assistance of Kathy Modigliani and the Pound House Children's Center, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

IMPROVING YOUR CENTER'S SUBSTITUTE POLICIES

Substitute child care workers are in short supply, but your child care program can take several steps to make the best use of available subs. Clarifying your center's procedures regarding substitutes is a useful starting place.

Defining Responsibilities

First of all, whose job is it in your program to arrange for substitutes when a staff member is sick? Make sure all permanent staff members agree on the answer! We strongly recommend that it not be the sick person; s/he should be resting instead of taking on more work duties, especially one that can be so difficult and stressful. A common result of asking teachers to arrange for their own substitutes is that teachers go to work sick rather than face such an ordeal. Whether the responsibility for arranging for subs falls on one person or is rotated periodically, the "dispatcher" should be thanked and encouraged to let off steam.

The sub shortage often discourages both staff and administrators from using earned and needed leave time. An adequate sub budget -- one that allows for a decent sub wage and clear procedures for finding subs -- encourages staff to use sick time and vacation time when they need it. Money for paying subs should be specifically included in a center's operating budget and should only be spent for other purposes if there is a surplus at the end of the year. The alternatives may be staff burnout or a serious illness which should have been cared for sooner.

Some child care programs find it very helpful to share a rotating sub with one or more other local centers. This allows each center some guaranteed coverage, and provides dependable employment for the sub. If no one is absent on your scheduled day, the sub could allow the regular staff time off to attend to planning or parent conferences, or to take long overdue compensatory time.

Hiring

When hiring a sub for the first time, be sure to have some questions ready, especially if you do not have a detailed sub list, or if subs on the list have not been screened or trained by a referral program. Arrange a brief meeting and/or a classroom visit before the sub works; ideally, the person should be paid at the regular sub rate for visiting.

If a visit is impossible, conduct a brief interview over the phone. Ask about the person's education and experience; which age groups they have worked with and which they prefer; and what kinds of activities they like to do with children. Keep the questions simple and few; this is not an interview for a permanent staff position!

Also be sure to give the sub information s/he needs: the name and location of the center, the hours or days when the sub will be needed, the pay procedure, the age group the sub will work with, and the person to report to upon arrival. Scheduling a sub to come even a few minutes early allows for important communication that may improve the course of the entire day or shift.

Orientation and Supervision

Once your child care program has found good substitutes, how do you keep them? Recently, a group of subs from the Berkeley, California area got together and talked about what they have liked and disliked about their subbing experiences. Their comments point out many ways that centers could improve their substitute policies.

Several subs said they liked the flexibility of the job, the variety, the perspective that comes from working in a number of different programs. Some considered it an ideal kind of child care training. There was considerable unity, however, in what they disliked:

- "a sense of invisibility"
- "a sense of not belonging to the center"
- "low respect"
- "lack of recognition"
- "feeling unwelcome"
- "asked to clean too much"
- "excluded from chats as well as professional discussions"

And of course: "low pay."

Tips for Working with Subs

Easy remedies exist for many common complaints of substitutes. Make sure you greet a substitute with a friendly welcome; introduce her/him to the staff and the children; perhaps everyone can wear name tags or do a "name game" or song. All this may sound obvious, but it's startling to hear how often these basic gestures are not made. Taking subs for granted or sending them to work without so much as a how-do-you-do sets a negative tone which may never be overcome. The sub may already be mentally crossing your program off her/his list.

Develop a brief handout on each classroom for substitutes and give them a few minutes to look it over. Preferably each sub should also have a liaison person s/he can go to throughout the day with any questions. Your handout should include:

- the daily schedule
- basic goals and any observances or practices unique to program (dietary restrictions, prayers before meals, etc.)
- emergency procedures
- where to find first aid equipment, emergency forms, toys, and other supplies
- a list of all the children in the classroom with notes on any children who have special needs or who need particular attention
- important rules about safety and the use of equipment

You may also want to suggest a few simple "sure success" activities and give some examples of the kind of guidance and discipline you use with the children. Revise the handout periodically so that subs aren't given outdated instructions. The more orientation you provide, the better the sub's chance of handling things smoothly and efficiently. This minimizes change in the children's routine and lets subs know that their time, energy and talents are valued. And tell subs when they can take a break -- they shouldn't have to ask!

Introduce subs to parents at the beginning or end of the day. A name tag for the sub is an easy way to make everyone feel more comfortable. Be sure to inform parents about your substitute policies and the kind of orientation or training that subs receive. Parents will appreciate your care and attention in this area, because seeing unfamiliar faces among the staff can be unsettling.

When the day is through -- and if you want subs to return --thank them and let them know you enjoyed working together. And pay the sub promptly! It's also a nice procedure for someone on the staff to make a follow-up phone call to subs to discuss how the day went, offer some constructive feedback, and to ask which things could be changed or improved.

As much as possible, include subs in staff discussions; a frequent sub might be invited to attend staff meetings or in-service training. Invite subs to events and parties at the center, too. These gestures foster a sense of belonging and make subs feel appreciated, encouraging them to stay on your sub list.

Periodically evaluate your sub policy. Talk about activities or instruction that's particularly easy (or hard) for temporary staff to handle. Certain regular routines may have to be adjusted if they prove too demanding for a novice. Identify subs you think are qualified to become permanent teachers and develop a plan to recruit them to your program. Make time for the permanent staff to talk about the enervating (but inevitable) process of continually orienting new people and adjusting to new faces and different teaching styles. This discussion may include developing responses to complaints from children and parents, as well.

Subs are entitled to common courtesy, but more than that, they are entitled to professional courtesy. A sub cannot do his or her best work without proper instructions and guidelines. It is up to you as a colleague or administrator to help the sub function optimally in an unfamiliar workplace. Take the time to give substitute caregivers the care they need: in the long run it will make your work less stressful and more pleasant. And when it's your turn to take a day off or a vacation, you'll be able to take the time you need -- without worry.

Most importantly, develop realistic expectations. Remember, there is an industry-wide shortage of trained personnel for child care, requiring strategies that go beyond individual center policy. For more information on this subject, see the CCEP booklet, A Good Sub is Hard to Find.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

A grievance procedure is a system which individuals can use to work out a conflict. It provides specific steps and a line of authority to follow in finding resolutions to disagreements. Although grievance procedures may take a variety of forms, ideally they allow for fair representation, ensuring that all sides of a conflict are heard.

Informal and Formal Grievance Procedures

Informal grievance procedures are practiced everyday in child care centers through "gripe sessions," staff meetings and shared problem-solving among teachers. Because taking care of young children requires teamwork and cooperation, child care staff often develop effective ways of clarifying their work roles and resolving conflicts. Informal procedures are important for the smooth operation of any center, but they often crumble at particularly stressful times.

A formal grievance procedure is a written plan which may be activated when informal methods fail. It includes:

1. Who can initiate a formal complaint (full-time staff, part-time staff, probationary staff, board of directors, etc.).
2. How the complaint can be initiated (verbally, written, as a group complaint or only individually).
3. To whom the complaint must be addressed (immediate supervisor, director, board of directors).
4. When the complaint must be responded to (e.g. within three working days).
5. How the resolution will take place (in writing, in a meeting, through a change in center policy).

Some procedures may further stipulate what kind of complaints the process is used for; whether union, legal or professional representation of the complainant is permitted; and whether other steps must be taken before the procedure is initiated.

Grievance procedures can vary from complex legal documents to very simple statements, but they should fit the needs of the specific child care center and be clearly understood by all staff.

Who Should Develop a Formal Grievance Procedure?

The governing board, the administration and/or the staff of a center can develop a formal grievance procedure. It is a good idea to have input from all levels of the center in writing the procedure. When people participate in creating a procedure they are more likely to follow it and accept resolutions in good faith. For a grievance procedure to be truly effective, staff must be guaranteed that no retaliatory action will be taken against them for implementing it.

Sample grievance procedures are available from other child care centers, the Department of Labor, unions, professional organizations and by request from the Child Care Employee Project. Use the sample as a model and then think carefully about your own center's particular needs. What works well for one center may be impractical for another.

When is a Grievance Procedure Used?

Grievance procedures can be used to cope with problems of absenteeism, program structure, policies, supervision, firings, length of work shifts or salaries and benefits. The procedure certainly is not needed for every complaint that arises, but it is a necessary back-up for staff when concerns seem unresolvable in other ways.

A grievance procedure, no matter how comprehensive and well-written, cannot alone solve problems. Grievance procedures facilitate solutions only if good communication, clear descriptions for every job and clear personnel policies already exist. And of course, like any tool, the grievance procedure is only as effective as those who use it. Ensuring positive administration and good communication is still in the hands of the child care management and staff.

BREAK POLICY

Instituting a dependable break policy in a child care center is a formidable task. Unlike many work places, child care centers cannot be stopped when people need rest. Although the children require on-going attention, workers in child care centers need and deserve their breaks. However, most child care workers fail to receive them. Reasons vary; in some states breaks are not required by law, and some states exempt employers from providing breaks to part-time workers. This often excludes child care staff who work at five- or six-hour-a-day programs.

In California, workers are entitled to a ten-minute paid break for every four hours' work; yet in the child care field the major impediment to taking breaks is the lack of adequate staff for coverage. Many staff wait until nap time for breaks. Others feel uncomfortable leaving on a break if a co-worker faces an unmanageable ratio of children to adults. Still others use breaks for much-needed curriculum planning and informal staff communication, certainly not a break from work.

Changing Attitudes

How can centers provide adequate breaks? Periodic evaluation of existing break policy is a first step toward developing a workable procedure. Although it may be awkward or intimidating at first to suggest a review of break policy, both staff and directors we have talked to found these evaluations fruitful. Breaks must be staggered and flexible in order to ensure that children are supervised, but flexibility must not turn into a call to abandon breaks altogether "for the good of the program." To function well, staff must have confidence that the administration believes they are entitled to and deserving of adequate breaks during the work day.

Coping with Coverage

Because of the additional cost of hiring staff, most centers must work with existing personnel. Following are some suggestions for coping with limited staff.

- Use administrative and support staff to cover breaks. Some centers assign non-teaching staff to cover breaks on different days of the week.

- Integrate volunteers to cover breaks. Assign parents, students or community members as floaters. The key to making this plan work is regular scheduling and dependable volunteers! There should be a thorough orientation given to each volunteer concerning the duties and responsibilities of a floater.

- If budget and ratio allow, designate one staff member as a floater during break time for a week at a time. This person then becomes familiar with each of the classrooms in a large center and also gains perspective on the program by changing roles.

- Overlap staff shifts. Some centers arrange for afternoon shifts to arrive during the last half-hour of the morning shift. Though more expensive, this model facilitates covering breaks and also allows teachers time to communicate about their program.

Additional Suggestions

- Request that break policy be formalized -- written into contracts, job descriptions and personnel policy.

- Provide an inviting space for staff that encourages relaxation during breaks. Too often the staff lounge, if it exists at all, doubles as an office, storage room and/or place for a sick child. Even if space is limited, a comfortable chair placed in front of a window can serve as a place to relax. If at all possible, the center budget should pay for coffee, tea, juice or other refreshments for the staff to enjoy.

- Consider paid preparation time for staff. Because people want to limit their unpaid hours each day, many staff use breaks to do the work they would rather not take home.

- Recognize that it's legitimate for workers to be adamant about taking time out. Over-extending themselves can make people more susceptible to exhaustion, illness and burn-out.

VOLUNTEERS

"Our center is using a lot of volunteers this summer and it's my job to supervise them. Although it seemed like a good idea at first, the kids seem confused, the volunteers are unhappy, and instead of less work, I've got more. Help!"

Volunteers can be a successful way to alleviate certain staffing problems and offer valuable experiences to those willing to donate time to your program. Volunteers bring their own unique talents, experiences and vitality to a program, and can offer welcome relief and support for the paid staff. However, volunteers can't make up for understaffing. Indeed, to effectively use volunteers, it involves additional staff time. If you are coordinating volunteers, you need to be freed from other duties (or be paid for your overtime) to do the job well. Here are some hints for coordinating volunteers:

Decide what you need. Even before you invite or schedule volunteers, you need to figure out what you will ask them to do. Suggestions for possible tasks and assignments can be solicited from the entire staff. Some tasks require specialized training, and it's important to match a qualified volunteer with the job. Other assignments may mean very specific working hours which need to be made clear to potential volunteers. "Job descriptions" can be developed and written for interested volunteers to look over before they decide to offer their services.

Assign responsibility. To make the experience less confusing, each volunteer needs to have a primary contact person on site. This person must be available to answer questions, confirm scheduling and discuss problems.

Make a plan. Every volunteer is entitled to a meaningful experience while working at your center. In order to make this possible, some discussion about expectations must take place before a final commitment is made between the program and volunteer. It is important to find out what the volunteer wants from the experience, and what skills s/he will bring to the program. Using descriptions already developed, the coordinator can assist volunteers in matching their skills and talents with existing program needs. Some volunteers aren't exactly sure what they would like to do when they arrive, and they may need to sample a variety of tasks before deciding on one area. A written agreement should be developed by the coordinator and volunteer, including a description of the expected responsibilities and hours. A successful volunteer-staff relationship is based in large part on respect -- even though a person is not being paid for her/his time, it doesn't mean that the time is not valuable. This professionalism should be reciprocal: provide the volunteer with guidelines which s/he must follow in order to work in your program.

Plan a volunteer orientation. Volunteers will feel more "connected" and committed to the program if they are kept informed about the program's objectives, and can see their role in reaching these goals. A large volunteer staff may require the development of a specific volunteer manual or training program. Whether the orientation is formal or informal, making the volunteer feel welcome and a part of the program is essential to helping her/him be effective. For instance, give volunteers a place of their own to put their belongings, and invite them to use the staff lounge.

As with any new staff, before the volunteer comes to the program on a regular basis, s/he should be introduced to the children and encouraged to spend time at the center as a visitor. During this time the children can become more familiar with the new "stranger" and the volunteer can observe the operations of the program. In addition to meeting the children, the volunteer can also meet the staff s/he will be working with, and learn emergency procedures and locations of supplies and materials. (Handouts and posters help remind volunteers of essential information.)

Be available. There is perhaps nothing as frustrating and frightening for a volunteer as being "abandoned." In some states volunteers are not allowed to be with children unless supervised. In any case, it is always a good idea to have a regular staff member present when volunteers are working with children. Even the most self-directed persons need supervision and support initially, and some people need this attention for the duration of their commitment to the program. "Check-in" with your volunteers frequently, and institute a specific time and place to meet with them to discuss their progress and satisfaction with their assignments. Many volunteers see their commitment as a "learning experience" and would appreciate feedback. In all cases, soliciting feedback from volunteers will help your volunteer procedures become more effective.

Don't abuse your volunteers. When a volunteer makes a commitment to your program and you have agreed on a schedule of hours and tasks, be sure to stick to your agreement! If you ask volunteers to consistently work more hours or do "drudgery" work, they may help you out once or twice, but most people can sense when they are being taken advantage of, and will leave the program quickly.

Thank them. Even if personal satisfaction is great from volunteering, there is no better feeling than to be thanked and appreciated for your hard work and efforts. It keeps you going!

* * *

With planning and communication, volunteers can be integrated into a program. Over time, as volunteers become more confident, they will require less intense supervision and emerge as valuable and unique members of your staff!

P.S. Many retired people are anxious to be volunteers. For more information, see "Older Adult Volunteers" in Day Care and Early Education, Spring 1983, or write to the Leo J. Ryan Inter-generational Child Care Center, 1200 Miller Road, Room 1, San Francisco, CA 94080 for details on existing intergenerational programs. Other resources are your local resource and referral agency, and your community volunteer bureau.

CAN IT HAPPEN HERE?
Accusation of Abuse -- Confronting the Unthinkable

It will probably take years to understand the full impact of recent cases of alleged child abuse in child care centers and family day care homes. Parents are feeling more nervous and vulnerable -- but so are child care providers. Morale among child care staff has been shaken. At a time when those who work in child care have needed praise and recognition more than ever, their motives have been assaulted and their skills ignored.

Although we know that good child care actually prevents abuse, accusations of abuse are in fact increasing -- and we have not yet developed adequate ways to respond.

The situation is like other kinds of "disaster planning." Few of us believe that an earthquake or fire is likely to destroy our homes or businesses. Yet most of us have developed careful procedures to ensure our safety and survival in case such a disaster strikes. We need to be just as prepared for an accusation of child abuse -- one of the most devastating disasters a child care program can experience.

Child care providers often confront the issue of child abuse only after they have actually been accused. In that case, the crisis can become an overwhelming maze of misunderstandings and rumors, and cause serious harm to the program and to the accused person.

It is hard to sit down and talk about these issues. If you can actually think that you or a co-worker could be accused, it may seem that you are insulting the quality of your own program. But what you are really saying is that you care enough to protect the children, staff and parents from undue danger, violation of their civil rights and unnecessary stress. If we are committed to protecting children and fellow employees, we need to examine our program practices -- and perhaps change some of them.

This article focuses on how to organize your response if an accusation of abuse in your program does occur. NOTE: The discussion here reflects California laws and procedures. In other states, check with your child protection agency for details of the law, and of how child abuse investigations are conducted.

When Suspicion Focuses on a Child Care Provider

Exactly how a provider will respond to being accused will depend on the type of situation:

- Has the parent only mentioned a concern or complaint?
- Has the parent made a direct accusation?
- Has a parent made a formal complaint to Community Care Licensing or a report to another agency?
- Is the accusation (in your opinion) true, partly true, a distortion of the facts, totally untrue? Child care providers are sometimes falsely accused of abuse when the abuse is actually taking place elsewhere -- in the child's home or neighborhood. A false accusation could be an honest mistake -- or it could be a deliberate attempt to mislead investigators.

You might also become a suspect in an investigation of reported abuse of a particular child, if you as a caregiver are one of the people intimately involved with that child -- even if no specific complaint has been made against you or the child care program.

The main point is to be as professional as possible if you or someone you work with is accused:

- Write down your account of exactly what happened.
- Have co-workers verify your account if possible.
- In the case of a child care center, the director or the board of directors may conduct an investigation from the center's side. Make copies of your account of the incident(s) available to them.
- Review your relationship with the family concerned. Consider what circumstances (such as arguments, or disagreements over your practices) might have sparked ill feelings.

There may also come a time when you suspect a child care provider of abuse or neglect. As a "mandated reporter" of known or suspected child abuse, you must make a report to your local child protective agency. You are also strongly encouraged to make a report to Community Care Licensing. California law protects you from retaliation by your employer if you report licensing violations, including corporal punishment or other abusive behavior, in a child care program. This law is often called the child care "whistle blowing law."

When an Investigation Opens

If a complaint about known or suspected abuse within a child care program has been made, an investigation by the Community Care Licensing Division of the State Department of Social Services (DSS) will follow.

Community Care Licensing must make an unannounced visit within 10 days of receiving the complaint, unless a visit would hamper another authorized agency's investigation. Licensing also has the authority to order a temporary closing of a child care center or a family day care home.

In a case of suspected abuse or neglect, the local child protective agency will also conduct an investigation. Law enforcement (the police or sheriff's department) may do the same.

Investigators are permitted to interview the accused person, as well as the administrators, other caregivers, children, and parents in a child care program, and to examine the physical setting.

Licensing workers must always be permitted to enter the program during business hours. Law enforcement officers, however, will need a warrant or your consent to enter the premises unless the situation is an emergency.

In child care centers, the director will have to decide on an accused employee's status during the investigation. Licensing may request that the person not work with children until the investigation is completed. If the investigation uncovers information or evidence which may jeopardize children's safety, Licensing would convey this to the licensee for appropriate action. Then, if the licensee fails to act upon this information, Licensing may be forced to take administrative action against the facility. The accused employee, however, may appeal by requesting a hearing.

A temporary "administrative leave" is one option to help protect the employee's rights as well as the program's liability. Additionally, the program will have to discuss and decide: Will the leave be paid or unpaid? Under what circumstances can s/he return? How long can the program afford to keep him or her on leave?

In order to minimize the trauma of an investigation, consider the following steps:

- Get legal -- and emotional -- help. Being accused of abuse strikes deep and hard. Find a lawyer who is familiar with child care issues. This is also the time to turn to a support group, a family day care association, or other child care providers who may have experience with abuse accusations or other such crises. If you have health insurance, you may be able to use it to work with a counselor or therapist.

- Decide how, and how much, other staff members, children and families will be informed. No one benefits when rumors fly. In some cases, the investigating agencies may request that a child care center director not inform the other employees. In other situations, they may contact parents and staff directly.

- It may be very helpful to bring in a therapist, counselor or other consultant who can work with the staff, and/or the children, to help calm fears, defuse rumors and resolve misunderstandings. A support group for the staff as a whole may boost morale -- especially if non-accused people feel that they are also under suspicion. Discuss as a group how to answer the children's questions about what has happened.

- Do not escalate a tense situation with the accusing family. Parents who have filed a report of abuse will often withdraw their child from the program -- but they might not. If trouble arises, a teacher in a center can politely refer a parent to the director. A family day care provider may have to become extremely business-like and reserved with the parent while an investigation is going on.

When the Dust Clears

An investigation can produce several results: it may be inconclusive, formal criminal charges may be made, or the employee in question may be completely cleared.

It's possible that Licensing and/or other investigating agencies will not inform you about the outcome of the investigation. If this happens, do call them for information -- you have the right to know. Ask your child care resource and referral agency, or consult a lawyer, if you have difficulty obtaining information.

Licensing keeps records of all complaints against child care providers or facilities, even if an investigation finds no evidence of wrongdoing. The name of an accused person, and of any suspected child victim, will also be listed in the Department of Justice Child Abuse Registry -- but if abuse was not substantiated in a case, the Registry will make note of this. A report determined to be "unfounded" will be removed from the Registry.

In child care centers: If there are no formal charges and the employee has been on leave, s/he may be able to return to work, depending on a center's policies. But even when a person has been found innocent, returning to the job may not be easy. An air of suspicion and mistrust may last a long time. "Bad publicity" may linger. Finding emotional support will continue to be very important. A teacher's leave of absence from a center, even if it was caused by a misinformed parent, may have led to disruption at the center. If hard feelings remain, discuss them openly.

In family day care: A family day care provider may find the business all but ruined if it needed to close temporarily, or if families have pulled out of the program during the investigation. Support will be very important in order to get the program going again. Enlist the help of fellow providers, your family day care association, satisfied parents and the local child care resource and referral agency.

Sadly, there is no magic formula for coping with the complicated issues of an accusation of abuse. Providers' best resources are their own good judgment, thoughtful policies, and strong professional relations with parents and community resources. It is essential that we share information with each other about our successes and failures. Because we are charting new territory, nobody can afford to go it alone.

* Adapted from an article by Gerri Ginsburg and Marcy Whitebook, Child Care Employee Project, Berkeley, CA. First printed in Beginnings, the Magazine for Teachers of Young Children, P.O. Box 2890, Redmond, WA 98073.

CHILD CARE LAW CENTER:
A Unique Community Resource

Federal and state law affects child care providers in many areas, such as licensing, personnel, zoning, taxation, insurance, liability and child abuse reporting. Many of these laws were drafted and passed in order to protect children, families and providers, and California law offers some of the best protection in the United States. But the legal bureaucracy can also be a time-consuming and aggravating maze. Fortunately, child care providers have a valuable source of information and legal help: the Child Care Law Center.

The Child Care Law Center serves as a legal resource on child care issues for the local, state and national child care communities. The Center's services are available to parents, attorneys, child care centers, family day care providers, policy makers, governmental and community agencies, unions and employers.

The Child Care Law Center provides:

Technical assistance on selected regulatory, business, tax and public benefit law matters.

Representation free of charge to qualified legal services projects, and on cases of importance to the child care community, through staff and a network of cooperating volunteer attorneys.

Training/educational seminars to provide preventive law information to the child care community, and to inform the legal community of legal issues in child care.

Publications explaining liability, insurance, non-profit incorporation, tax-exempt status, contracts, taxes, child abuse, zoning, building codes, school-age child care, and legal and tax aspects of employer-supported child care. Write for a free publication list.

A Law and Policy Resources Bank for legislation, cases, briefs and legal memoranda on critical legal issues in child care. Write for more information.

Advocacy support and policy development on legislative and regulatory issues, undertaken to improve local, state and national policies toward child care. The Law Center has been especially active in the areas of licensing standards and enforcement; consideration of child care in the land use planning process; taxes and benefits; school-age child care; child abuse reporting; and the employment rights of child care workers.

The Child Care Law Center can be reached at 22 Second St., Fifth Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105, (415) 495-5498. Service calls are taken Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, from 9-12.